Breaking the Empire State

by
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INT. COMMON ROOM / FIRE STATION - MORNING

Sitting on mismatched chairs at a round table near a half-sized refrigerator, a microwave and an ancient toaster oven are two tired men in their mid-twenties who have dirty-blonde hair, crooked noses, blue eyes, square jaws, athletic builds, jeans and t-shirts. LAWRENCE WESTERMARK puts a spoonful of cereal into his mouth, CRUNCHES oats, swallows and looks at his younger brother RHETT WESTERMARK, who taps floating rings with the tip of his spoon, submerging them in a bowl of milk.

LAWRENCE
Gonna eat them or drown them?

RHETT
They’re too loud to eat.

LAWRENCE
Hungover?

RHETT
A little.

LAWRENCE
I was the same way day after my first wet down.

The elder sibling rises from his chair, walks over to the toaster oven, puts three pieces of rye bread on the grill, closes the door and twists the dial.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
Toast’s better for a hangover than cereal.

RHETT
But not quieter.

LAWRENCE
Soak it in coffee.

Lawrence returns to the table and sits.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)
What was that kind mom used to get us? The one with the gorillas?

Rhett is perplexed by the description.

RHETT
Cereal?

LAWRENCE
Yeah. They were purple and green and had those flat marshmallows-- the crunchy kind that taste like they’re made for space travel.

RHETT
Those were frogs.

LAWRENCE
The marshmallows?

RHETT
The gorillas-- they were frogs. I think the marshmallows were supposed to be lily pads or something.
(he thinks)
Maybe skateboards.
(he thinks)
'Ribbits!'

LAWRENCE
'Ribbits!' That's right. We loved that stuff. Do they still make it?

An ALARM sounds, and Rhett winces. Both men shovel cereal, rise from their chairs and hasten from the room.

AMPLIFIED MALE VOICE (O.S.)
All fighters-- get in your neons and drop to quints. All fighters.

Underneath the luminous coils, the toast starts to blacken.

A moment later, Rhett scrambles into the room, unplugs the ancient device, flings the door and tosses the smoking squares onto the counter.

LAWRENCE (O.S.)
That would've been ironic.

INT. TROPHY ROOM / FIRE STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Pulling on bright green reflector coats while carrying self-contained breathing apparatuses and helmets, the Westermark brothers pass through the trophy room, where stands a display case that contains two scorched uniforms, a blackened television, a warped Halligan pole, a seared brassiere and several photos of firemen containing blazes with hoses and mounted pump cannons.

As they near the far door, Lawrence glances at Rhett, whose face is covered with sweat.

LAWRENCE
You okay?

RHETT
Fine.

Boots POUND across the floor throughout the fire house.

AMPLIFIED MALE VOICE
Two Zero One mark Two proceed to Pacific and White.

INT. APPARATUS GARAGE / THE FIRE STATION - SAME

Lawrence slides down a brass pole and lands behind two parked fire engines, followed by Rhett, whose head pounds when his boots impact the floor. JONES hastens past the younger Westermark as a thick-necked fellow of forty-three named BRICK climbs into the truck named Ingrid.

AMPLIFIED MALE VOICE
Two Zero One mark One proceed to the World Trade Center.

Confused by the information, Rhett follows after his brother.

RHETT
Why're they calling out here for the WTC?

LAWRENCE
Not sure.
(he looks at Rhett)
Get in Marilyn and go to the first call.

RHETT
I can go with you to the-

LAWRENCE
(stern)
Rhett.
(he points)
Get in that apparatus.

RHETT
Yessir.

Lawrence and Jones fill Ingrid's remaining seats and SLAM her doors. Ahead of the vehicle, the rising garage door CLACKS into the ceiling, admitting bright morning sunlight. RUMBLING, the fire engine glides onto the Brooklyn street, where traffic has been stopped by TALL TODD, a six-and-a-half-foot bald, black firefighter.

Rhett hastens to Marilyn, bounds up a corrugated step and flings himself into the cab, where he is appraised by the driver, a muscular Mexican-American who has a thick mustache, slits for eyes and an embroidered name tag on his reflector coat that reads, 'GONZALEZ.'

GONZALEZ
You gonna puke on Marilyn?
(he shake his head)
She's ain't into that.

RHETT
I'm fine. What's happening over at the World Trade Center?

GONZALEZ
Don't know.

Rhett watches the other fire engine disappear around a distant corner. Two more FIREFIGHTERS clamber into Marilyn, and the second one SLAMS the door.

EXT. SMOKING BROWNSTONE / PACIFIC STREET - LATER

Parked on the curb outside a five-story brownstone are two ambulances and Marilyn, whose flashing lights may have hypnotized a few of the eighteen evacuated TENANTS. Water trickles from three apartment windows as Rhett and the Asian Firefighter escort an OLD BLACK WOMAN down the stoop steps, holding an oxygen mask to her face.

Gonzalez sees the recovered civilian, returns to the cab of the apparatus and CLICKS a hand microphone.

GONZALEZ
This is unit Two Zero One mark Two. All tenants accounted for. Shall we proceed to the World Trade Center?

The radio WHINES and CRACKLES.

MALE VOICE FROM RADIO (O.S.)
Stand by for orders.

A moment after Rhett relinquishes custody of the oldster, he finds a garbage can, leans over and retches. Wiping his mouth, he rises and returns to Marilyn.

RHETT
Are we going to the towers?

GONZALEZ
Waiting for dispatch.

RHETT
What's happening now?

GONZALEZ
They're evacuating. Looks like two planes crashed-

Somebody SCREAMS. Rhett and Gonzalez look at the building next door, which is a squat metallic diner. Inside the establishment, the PATRONS stare at a mounted television screen. Everyone is horrified by what they see.

Apprehensive, Rhett looks at Gonzalez, who raises and CLICKS his hand microphone.

GONZALEZ (CONT'D)
Unit Two Zero One mark Two, request permission to proceed to World Trade Center. Copy?

Both men await an answer. There is no response.

RHETT
We need to go.

Nodding, Gonzalez CLICKS the hand microphone.

GONZALEZ
Unit Two Zero One mark Two is proceeding to the World Trade Center.

RHETT
I'll get Todd.

Rhett pulls himself onto the back of the fire engine and scrambles to the extended ladder, which leans against the roof of the five-story brownstone.

As he climbs, hand over hand, a terrible sickness unrelated to alcohol fills his body. Soon, he clambers onto the roof and sees Tall Todd, who stares west, stunned and horrified.

The younger Westermark brother turns around. On the far side of Brooklyn and the East River stands Manhattan, and at its southern end, the two tallest buildings-- the Twin Towers. Black smoke rises from the sibling structures in thick gouts.

Rhett reaches underneath his jacket, withdraws his cellphone and flips the device open. The display reads, '1 message from Lawrence Westermark.'

Down below, people SHOUT in anger and disbelief.

Rhett looks up. The distant South Tower crumbles, sinking inside a dark cataract of its own boiling dust and debris. Tears fill the fireman's eyes, and for a terrible moment, the world pauses.

Titlecard: Twelve years later...

INT. BEDROOM / DANIELLE'S APARTMENT - AN HOUR BEFORE DAWN

The wide picture window of an eighteenth-floor apartment admits a view of Central Park-- a lake of autumnal trees that is circumscribed by buildings and blanketed by a violescent mist. Sleeping on a wide bed and dimly lighted by the ambient glow is DANIELLE NELSON, a tall, thirty-seven-year-old woman who has short blonde hair, a thoughtful forehead, an upturned nose, a blue camisole and floppy wool socks. Rhett Westermark stands beside her, quietly dressing.

The intervening years have put lines on his face, scars on his chest and hardened his body into a tool of purpose.

As he slips buttons through eyelets, the woman stirs. For a moment, she watches him dress, his taut form silhouetted by the effulgent fog.

DANIELLE
You're leaving?

WESTERMARK
Yeah.

The dark shape dons pants.

DANIELLE
Were you going to wake me? Before you left? It's disorienting when you vanish.

The silhouetted man pulls a belt through the loops of his slacks and draws its tongue through the buckle.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
Next time, okay?-- you'll wake me...?

A dark line stretches between Westermark's hands, crosses his neck and dangles from his collar.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
Okay?

WESTERMARK
I nodded.

DANIELLE
I can't see you. You're like a prowler in here.

The silhouetted man reaches for his jacket.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
You can turn on the light.

WESTERMARK
No need.

Westermark walks over to Danielle and leans over. The ends of his tie caress her right arm as he kisses her mouth. She places a hand on his shoulder and he withdraws.

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
Go back to sleep.

DANIELLE
We're getting together tonight, right?

The silhouette grows smaller. A vertical line of light splits the darkness and becomes a rectangle-- a doorway.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
Rhett?

WESTERMARK
I'm nodding.

INT. BASKETBALL COURT - LATER

Wearing his hair in a short fade and showing a few wrinkles, Tall Todd stretches his arms out as Westermark hunches over a basketball that he dribbles tight and low. Both men wear navy blue FDNY shirts and shorts and are dripping with sweat. The white man feints right, cuts left, passes by his far taller opponent and fires a shot that strikes the rim once and sinks through the net.

TALL TODD
Fuck. I mean...nice shot.

Tall Todd goes to the top of the key.

TALL TODD (CONT'D)
What's the score?

Westermark tosses the ball to his opponent, who catches it and dribbles.

WESTERMARK
Not sure.

TALL TODD
You're up by a lot. Maybe twenty-four to sixteen. Something like that?

WESTERMARK
I believe you.
(he points at the ball)
Put it in play.

TALL TODD
You don't care if you win?

WESTERMARK
I care how I perform.

EXT. BALCONY / DANIELLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Two candles sit upon the cloth-covered table of an eighteenth floor balcony, where sits Danielle, wearing gray slacks and a lavender sweater, holding a bulb of white wine. As she sets down her drink, Westermark walks through the door, dressed in black and carrying two plates of food.

DANIELLE
How do you do that?

The dishes gently CLINK upon the table. Steam rises from salmon filets, haricort verts and wild rice.

WESTERMARK
What?

DANIELLE
You made all of this and you don’t have a single spot on you.

WESTERMARK
I’m organized.

DANIELLE
You don’t even wear an apron.

WESTERMARK
Never thought I looked good in a dress.

DANIELLE
Even when I wear an apron, I find debris.

Westermark seizes the bottle and pours more white wine into the woman’s glass.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
Trying to get me drunk?

WESTERMARK
Always.

DANIELLE
You don’t need to.

WESTERMARK
Just in case.

The black clad fellow plants a gentle kiss upon the woman’s mouth, sits and picks up his glass of mineral water. Presently, the served woman eats a piece of fish and makes a pleasurable noise.

DANIELLE
Shit this is good.

WESTERMARK
Thanks.

After setting a napkin upon a his lap, Westermark raises his fork and knife.

DANIELLE
Is it your line of work that makes you so...fastidious?

WESTERMARK
Doing things neatly saves time.

DANIELLE
Are you in a rush?

The fellow points his knife over his shoulder.

WESTERMARK
There's a bedroom two doors away.

DANIELLE
Understood.

EXT. 5TH AVENUE BETWEEN 33RD AND 34TH STREET - MORNING

Scores of NEW YORKERS and TOURISTS filter through the brass revolving doors of the tallest skyscraper in Manhattan-- the Empire State Building, a stone and metal edifice that takes up the entire block between Thirty-third and Thirty-fourth Streets and extends halfway to the adjacent avenue. Opposite the landmark are crowded shops, specializing in hot dogs, pizzas, bagels, salads and souvenirs.

A thirty-five-year-old Indian man who has long hair, an olive-colored linen suit and the name CHATTERJEE stands in front of a closed metal door that is nestled between Franco's Hot Dogs and Trusted Bankers of North America. Currently, he locates a button marked 6F and presses it for two full seconds.

MALE VOICE IN INTERCOM (O.S.)
Yes?

Chatterjee says nothing. A moment later, he fingers the same button for two seconds and releases it. The door BUZZES, and he passes inside.

INT. 6TH FLOOR / BUILDING BETWEEN TRUSTED AND FRANCO'S - MOMENTS LATER

Chatterjee walks from the stairwell into the sixth floor hallway, where he passes the offices of an acupuncturist and a divorce lawyer and stops in front of a suite that is marked '6F.' A bolt CLACKS, and the door opens, revealing a stripe of absolute darkness.

DISTORTED MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Come in.

INT. ROOM 6F / BUILDING BETWEEN TRUSTED AND FRANCO'S - SAME

A moment after Chatterjee steps into the opaque enclosure, the door shuts, and a bolt CLACKS.

A wall-mounted fluorescent bulb flickers to life, illuminating the room, which is covered by matte black tarpaulins and inhabited by two HOODED MEN whose eyes are concealed by silver sunglasses. One of the individuals holds a long hunting knife.

Composed, the Indian man looks west. Two rectilinear objects that are as big as bureaus sit on the far side of the room, covered by a black cloths.

A Hooded Man opens a cellphone and points it at Chatterjee.

DISTORTED MALE VOICE ON PHONE
The second unit has a problem with RGB input two.

The visitor nods at four distorted reflections of his face and proceeds to the object on the left.

CHATTERJEE
(English Accent)
When you're doing tests, you're grounding the line?

The Hooded Man thumbs his phone.

DISTORTED MALE VOICE ON PHONE
Yes.

Chatterjee seizes a black cloth and pulls it loose, revealing a 4K digital movie projector. The machine's large lens points west, directly at a covered-over window.

INT. BEDROOM / DANIELLE'S APARTMENT - SAME

Morning sunshine illuminates the curtains and Danielle's left arm and leg as she lies asleep in bed beside Westermark, who is fully awake. Currently, the man extricates himself from sheets and limbs and rises from the mattress.

He grabs his shirt. Slotting buttons, he eyes the sleeping woman and contemplates whether or not he should awaken her. Once his pant are on, he turns away, pads across the carpet and opens the door. There, he pauses.

A moment later, Westermark returns to the bed, leans over and gently touches the woman's bright left arm.

WESTERMARK
I have to get to work.

Eyes closed, Danielle nods her head.

DANIELLE
Kiss.

Westermark kisses her lips and walks toward the door.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
Thank you.

INT. LIVING ROOM / WESTERMARK'S APARTMENT - LATE MORNING

Dressed in blue jeans, Westermark pads into his Spartan living room and passes by a framed photograph that shows him, his brother Lawrence and a dozen other firefighters drinking and laughing at a wet down (the ceremonial bathing of a new fire engine with hoses). The placard at the bottom of the image reads, 'September 10th, 2001.'

Soon, the man pulls out a wooden chair and sits at a table that is covered with towels, atop which lie six semiautomatic pistols, a dry brush, a solvent bottle and four boxes of ammunition. With his right hand, he scratches the left side of his back, which is adorned with a tattoo of a firefighter's helmet, two crossed hatchets and the words, 'Never Forget.'

Westermark picks up a Sig Sauer, unlocks the slide, discards the magazine, points the gun and dry fires, CLICK. Presently, he SNAPS the take-out levers, removes the top of the pistol, plucks the spring, isolates the barrel and picks up the bottle of solvent.

Somebody KNOCKS on the door. Westermark claims a loaded gun, rises from his chair and pads across the bare wood. After a glance through a steel-reinforced peephole, he admits ADIB, a slim, handsome and well-dressed forty-year-old Arabic fellow who carries a briefcase. Once the guest is inside, the shirtless inhabitant shuts and locks the door.

WESTERMARK
Why're you manifest?

ADIB
New intel.

WESTERMARK
Premium?

ADIB
We hope. An op paid The Price to get it to us.

Westermark claims the briefcase.

WESTERMARK
I'll do what I can to give it meaning.

INT. DIRECTOR’S OFFICE / MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCE - LATER

Carrying a portfolio and a mug of coffee and dressed in a mocha pants suit, Danielle walks into a carpeted office that has an American flag on the wall and a view of the concrete patio that is three floors below. After shutting the door and setting down her presentation materials, the museum director approaches an aquarium where sea horses swim in slow circles like broken motorboats.

A cellphone RINGS. Danielle withdraws the device from her jacket and sees the caller’s name-- ‘Rhett Westermark.’ Surprised, she unfolds the device and sets it to her ear.

DANIELLE
Hi. How are you?
(she listens)
It went well, thanks for asking. Feinberg’s going to donate five.
(she listens)
They’re good. Though Lancelot’s a little hyper.

An equine tenants curls the end of its prehensile tale around a female. Listening to the phone, Danielle hears something that removes the smile from her face.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
For how long?
(she listens)
Should I find another date for the opening?

The museum director is displeased by what she hears.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
I was joking. But that would be okay with you? If I spent the evening with another man?

Disappointment plays upon her face as she listens to Westermark’s answer.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
If that’s how you feel, then that’s how you feel. Give a call when you’re back...if you want. Good luck.
(she listens)
Bye.

Danielle CLICKS off her phone, SNAPS it shut and tosses it onto her desk. Presently, she sips her coffee and returns her attention to the aquarium, where the two entangled sea horses pull in opposite directions, going nowhere.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
Trying to tell me something?

Titlecard: Liaoning, China

INT. VICE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE / LONGWEI INTL., INC. - LATER

A bronze-skinned Mandarin in black named LONGWEI stands beside his ELDEST SON, who wears an iridescent aquamarine suit and a thin smile as he shakes hands with a pretty Turkish businessman named ASLAN and his prune-faced bodyguard, OMURTAK. Presently, the quartet walks across a modern office that overlooks a vast warehouse, wherein scores of sweating IRON WORKERS who wear aprons and face masks monitor bright furnaces. Watching the activity below, Aslan drags on a cigarette.

ASLAN
Looks like they could use some air conditioning in there.

Aslan blows smoke at the window and looks at his hosts.

ELDEST SON
How was you trip to the Great Wall?

ASLAN
Fine. Best cellphone reception in the area.

Longwei looks meaningfully at his progeny.

ELDEST SON
Allow me show you the prototype.

The Turkish men are escorted to two leather chairs, where they sit, facing a large glass desk. Aslan stabs his cigarette on small plate.

ASLAN
Hope that's an ashtray.

Presently, the Eldest Son sets a lacquered black box upon the table and opens it. Inside the container lies a white laptop computer. The Turkish men exchange a nod as Longwei sits in a leather chair on the opposite side of the desk.

LONGWEI
Examine it.

Aslan inspects the laptop computer, turning it over in his hands, eyeing every detail. Satisfied, he sets the device down and opens it up. For a moment he runs his fingers along the black screen.

ELDEST SON
That very unit passed through airport security in twelve different countries.

ASLAN
Good.

ELDEST SON
Hold down the ‘Shift’ key and type the numbers, four, five and six.

The Turkish businessman fingers the ‘Shift’ key, and the devices CLICKS. Presently, he types the numbers ‘4,’ ‘5’ and ‘6.’ A drawer slides out of the side of the laptop, a compartment that is nearly the size of the entire computer.

ELDEST SON (CONT'D)
The combination can be altered whenever the drawer is open.

Closely inspecting the device, Aslan nods.

ELDEST SON (CONT'D)
Hold down the ‘Control’ key and press the letters V and X.

Aslan presses the ‘Control’ key, and the device CLICKS. Then, he types the letters ‘V’ and ‘X.’ A drawer that is the size of a wallet POPS out of the front of the computer. Inside the little compartment are three nooks, each the size of one AA battery.

ELDEST SON (CONT'D)
Hold down the ‘Option’ key and type the letter ‘P.’

The Turkish businessman fingers the ‘Option’ key and presses the letter ‘P.’ Needles flash inside the nooks.

ELDEST SON (CONT'D)
In the absence of an explosion, these can facilitate the distribution of bio weapons.

ASLAN
That’s a fine addition.

Aslan shuts the drawers, and they CLICK into place. Once again, the device looks like a normal laptop computer.

ASLAN (CONT'D)
Though my clients tend to favor explosions.

EXT. FRONT DRIVE / FAMOUS GRAND DRAGON HOTEL - LATER

A black limousine bearing Aslan and Omurtak glides in-between two green dragon statues and up a driveway, where each stone tile is a fractal octagon. Ahead of the vehicle stands the Famous Grand Dragon Hotel, a modern, forty-story building that is decorated with elaborate bas reliefs.

INT. 40TH HALLWAY / FAMOUS GRAND DRAGON HOTEL - MOMENTS LATER

Aslan YAWNS as he and Omurtak walk up a jade-colored hall toward one of the eight deluxe suites that comprise the top floor. Twenty feet from the last door, the bodyguard draws a semiautomatic pistol from his jacket and raises his free hand. The businessman nods his head and stops.

Behind the Turkish duo, the door to room 4003 silently opens.

Aslan YAWNS. Omurtak nears 4008, cautious and quiet.

Something cold presses into the businessman's neck.

The bodyguard turns around and sees that his boss is being held at gunpoint by Westermark, who wears a brown suit and latex gloves.

WESTERMARK
(to Omurtak)
Drop your gun or I'll break his teeth.

OMURTAK
No speak English.

WESTERMARK
Bullshit.

OMURTAK
No speak-

The agent hammers his pistol into Aslan's mouth, smashing his lips and CRACKING two incisors.

OMURTAK (CONT'D)
Okay, okay- I do.

Omurtak sets his weapon on the ground.

WESTERMARK
Open the door.

The bodyguard slots a key card. A green light blinks, and the automated bolt CLACKS.

INT. ROOM 4008 / FAMOUS GRAND DRAGON HOTEL - SAME

The dimly-lighted split-level luxury suite has divans, couches, televisions, a fountain and two glass walls that admit a panoramic view of the surrounding mountains.

WESTERMARK (O.S.)
Slow. Hands up.

Hands raised, Omurtak enters the room and glances at a rack upon the wall that holds a large beige trench coat.

Aslan walks inside, cupping his gory mouth, followed by Westermark, who claims the bodyguard's discarded gun, shuts the door and twists the bolt.

The Turkish businessman eyes his bodyguard and the hanging trench coat and turns to face his captor.

ASLAN
What do you want?

WESTERMARK
Sit d-

The agent stumbles, dropping his gun.

Aslan ducks. Omurtak lunges for the trench coat.

Instantly, another silencer-fitted pistol is in Westermark's hand, flashing white fire. Omurtak's eyes darken and the back of his head erupts, releasing clumpy thoughts. Lobotomized, the bodyguard SLAMS against the marble.

Aslan reaches for the dropped pistol and sees that it is pinned beneath the agent's shoe...with its safety on. Comprehension burgeons within the Turkish fellow.

ASLAN
This was a trick? So you could-

WESTERMARK
Sit down.
(he points)
On that girl couch.

The businessman sits on the indicated divan. Westermark picks up his dropped pistol, holsters it, walks to the hanging trench coat and pulls back its lapels, revealing a fully-automatic shotgun.

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
This looks like American hardware,
Mr. Demir.

ASLAN
You're with the C.I.A.?

The agent plucks the twenty-round drum from the hanging weapon and tosses it into the fountain, where it SPLASHES.

WESTERMARK
I'm a guy.

ASLAN
Are you going to kill me?

WESTERMARK
Let me show you something.

Aslan spits gore and tooth splinters into the fountain and watches Westermark step over Omurtak's draining head, descend three steps and approach the northern window. At the glass, the agent withdraws a thick black marker from his coat and POPS off its cap.

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
This is where you were today-

The agent draws a circle on the window, isolating a dark swath that is nestled in the distant mountain woodlands. Felt SQUEAKS, startling the Turkish man.

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
Longwei's foundry.

Westermark drops the marker, withdraws his cellphone and dials a ten digit code. A moment later, he shuts and pockets the device.

ASLAN
What are-

WESTERMARK
Quiet.

The agent points at the window. For a moment, the two men watch in silence.

ASLAN
It appears as if-

A small spark flickers within the distant area that is circumscribed by the marker. Aslan's stomach sinks.

Soon, four spheres of light blossom and become a brilliant dome of white fire. Thunder BOOMS as the sounds of the far-off explosions finally reach the hotel.

Westermark monitors his frightened captive.

WESTERMARK
You will give me a list of your clients.

The agent TAPS the window with his silencer. Inside the black circle, fires claw at the night.

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
That's the alternative.

Tears shine in Aslan's eyes. After a moment of introspection, the fellow nods his head, 'yes.'

Titlecard: New York City

INT. TAXI CAB - SAME

A hunched and rugose LITHUANIAN CABBIE whose green turtleneck sweater makes him look like a turtle drives up Fifth Avenue. Sitting in the back of his vehicle are Danielle and MRS. FEINBERG, a petite, wealthy seventy-eight-year-old grande dame who has dyed black hair, lively eyes, sharp features, bright jewels and an immodest red dress.

MRS. FEINBERG
Swing your tomahawk and cut him loose.

DANIELLE
I don't think it'd require a tomahawk.

MRS. FEINBERG
You want to have kids someday?

DANIELLE
I'm not sure. Maybe.

MRS. FEINBERG
So that's it right there. You date somebody like this and you don't have to decide-- you can just put it off. And then one day you sit down and two tumbleweeds roll out from between your legs. Your ovaries.

The Lithuanian Cabbie looks in the rearview mirror.

DANIELLE
Mrs. Feinberg, I-

MRS. FEINBERG
Biology isn't a 'Maybe.'
(to the cabbie)
Why's the traffic so bad?

LITHUANIAN CABBIE
The President is here.

MRS. FEINBERG
They block traffic for that liar?

Outside, a car HONKS, which coaxes similar objections from the surrounding vehicles. Mrs. Feinberg frowns and TAPS the driver's shoulder.

MRS. FEINBERG (CONT'D)
Get around all this congestion.

The turtle-like fellow contemplates the unlikely physics of her request.

MRS. FEINBERG (CONT'D)
(to Danielle)
Your current relationship is a farce. Your boyfriend said you could go out with another man.

DANIELLE
I don't like the word 'boyfriend.'

MRS. FEINBERG
What do you use? 'Partner?' That's dreadful. A partner's a business associate or someone you rob banks with.

DANIELLE
I like the word 'companion.'

MRS. FEINBERG
That's fine. Why don't people say that?

DANIELLE
Because companions are often described as 'faithful' and 'paid,' which makes them dogs and hookers.

MRS. FEINBERG
That's unfortunate.

Danielle pats Mrs. Feinberg's left hand. Outside the cab, HONKS and SHOUTS eddy across inert metal.

DANIELLE
I appreciate what you're saying and I'm going to talk to him. It's been six months and this thing needs some definition.

MRS. FEINBERG
The sex must be very good for you to put up with this.

DANIELLE
That aspect is terrific, but it's more than that.
(she thinks)
I've had a few relationships since Roger died--normal ones with wealthy, well-educated men--but Rhett is the only man I've dated who I genuinely admire. He's got baggage--like everyone who isn't twenty--but he matters. He's significant.

EXT. 42ND STREET AND 3RD AVENUE - SAME

Metal barriers, neon-orange cones, yellow tape and TRAFFIC OFFICERS wearing reflector vests block off the intersection of Third Avenue and Forty-second Street. Upon the abutting sidewalks stand all varieties of NEW YORKERS, watching the open roads, waiting expectantly.

The vanguard of the presidential motorcade enters the area-- a pair of RUMBLING police motorcycles, cruising in tandem, followed by three more bikes and four police cars. All of them fly small American flags and flash their siren lights.

Soon, the roadside congregation focuses on the succeeding vehicles-- two black, armored limousines. APPLAUSE and CHEERS contradict hostile SHOUTS and BOOS. Signs climb into the air: 'Shave Your Mustache!' 'We Support President Brownley!' 'We Love You!' 'Stop the War in Breznia-- like you promised!!!' 'Down with Brownley!' and 'New York Yankees #1.'

A skinny COLLEGE GIRL who wears peace-sign earrings looks at her neighbor, an OILY FELLOW who eats a sausage, onion and pepper sandwich.

COLLEGE GIRL
Which one's Brownley in?

The man waggles processed meat at the second limousine.

COLLEGE GIRL (CONT'D)
Thank you very much.
(to the limo)
Rot in hell!

OILY FELLOW
(thick Bronx accent)
Hey. Have some respect for da guy.
(he chews some sausage)
He's a president.

The police vehicles and twin limousines cross the block, followed by four armored SUVs, a surveillance car, a hazardous-events hybrid, five press vans and an ambulance.

EXT. UNITED NATIONS PLAZA - SAME

The lines of neon cones, yellow tape, TRAFFIC OFFICERS and CROWDS extend to First Avenue, where stands the plaza that contains the United Nation Building, a thirty-nine floor rectangular edifice of stone and aquamarine glass that dwarfs its neighbors. Flags from every country in the global organization SNAP in the wind as the motorcade proceeds along the front drive. New Yorkers raise signs that read, 'We Support You, President Brownley!' 'End the war!' and of course, 'Shave Your Mustache!'

INT. LARGE DOWNTOWN LOFT WITH EXPOSED BRICK WALLS - SAME

A silent high definition television sits atop a crate in the corner of a dark, brick and wood loft that has covered windows. SECRET SERVICE MEN hasten across pixels and open the right rear door of the second armored limousine. Rising from the darkened interior of the car is PRESIDENT BROWNLEY, a tall, sharply-dressed fifty-six-year-old white man who has silver-brown hair, thick eyebrows, a thicker mustache and a scar on his right cheek. Once upright, the chief executive flashes a smile and waves.

Watching the television from beside a table that has neatly-bundled papers, four cellphones and five laptop computers is HAWKINS, a pockmarked, light-skinned forty-eight-year-old black man who wears a brown sweater and corduroy pants. His eyes shine with hatred as he watches the president greet foreign AMBASSADORS.

On the far side of the loft, one of the two ARMED GUARDS looks at the seated man.

ARMED GUARD WITH CLEFT LIP
You don't want to hear what the president's saying?

HAWKINS
It will not be of any consequence.

President Brownley enters the United Nations Building, followed by his security team, who then close the door.

Nodding, Hawkins glances at the Armed Guards.

HAWKINS (CONT'D)
Five minutes.

Without a word, the two men draw guns from their holsters, walk across CREAKING wood and enter the outer hall.

Once the door shuts, Hawkins returns his attention to the television, which shows the bright smiling face of a redheaded NEWS ANCHOR. As she silently blathers, the introspective man withdraws his cellphone, opens it, highlights a number and presses 'Connect.' The face of a black woman who has a short hair, a narrow nose and sad eyes appears on the screen as well as the words, 'Dialing... Sandra (Home).'

Hawkins presses the receiver to his ear and waits.

HAWKINS (CONT'D)
Hi.
(he listens)
How are you feeling today?
(he listens)
You took your medication?
(he listens)
(MORE)

HAWKINS (CONT'D)
Good.
(he listens)
I'm not sure. There are a lot of variables.
(he listens)
I know you don't understand. I'll explain everything to you when I get back.
(he listens)
Call this phone if you need to reach me. I'll check messages whenever I can.
(he listens)
Take care of yourself.
(he listens)
I love you too. And give my love to the boys.
(he listens)
Bye.

Hawkins CLICKS the 'Disconnect' button and the words, 'Call ended,' appear on screen. As he looks at the frozen image of his wife, the past and the future press down upon him.

The man releases the cellphone. It PLUNKS in a glass of water, sinks and CLINKS upon the bottom. Lights flicker.

The image of the sad-eyed woman disappears.

The pockmarked man leans back in his chair and looks at the television, where he sees President Brownley address a room full of attentive Ambassadors. Disgusted, Hawkins seizes a four-foot long tube of paper and unrolls it, revealing a large schematic map of the Empire State Building that is marked with hundreds of arrows, circles, numbers and lines.

For the eleventh time that day, he surveys his plan.

INT. HALLWAY / THE HAWKINS'S HOME - SAME

SANDRA HAWKINS drifts up the hall, wheeled by a MALE NURSE. On her left lies a rose-colored bathroom and on her right hang three pictures of herself and her husband when they were twenty years younger.

INT. THE BOYS' ROOM / THE HAWKINS'S HOME - SAME

The woman glides into the boys' room and passes two neatly-made beds. After her helper stops the chair, he departs.

Framed photographs of two young soldiers sit upon a shelf directly in front of Sandra, each accompanied by a lacquered military urn that is decorated with a proud American eagle.

SANDRA
Hi boys.
(she clears her throat)
Your father wanted me to tell you something.

EXT. 33RD STREET OFF OF 5TH AVENUE - LATE DAY

A BEARDED DRIVER wearing jeans and a windbreaker backs a white cargo truck underneath a scaffold into a loading dock on the south face of the Empire State Building. PEDESTRIANS who are late for work weave past the RUMBLING vehicle, discussing their tardiness on their cellphones and holding out cups of coffee as if the beverages were torches.

INT. SOUTH LOADING DOCK / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Seated on a rolling chair atop the platform is SHANICE, a heavy black Latina who watches a small black-and-white television that may have broadcast the moon landing as a live event. A moment after the Bearded Driver backs his truck against a dock bumper, he cuts the engine, climbs out of the vehicle and approaches the side stairwell.

SHANICE
What company you with?

Ascending the steps, the fellow reaches into his jacket.

BEARDED DRIVER
(Eastern European Accent)
David Enterprises. Going to second floor.

He hands a folded sheet of paper to the woman, turns around and strides toward the back of his vehicle.

SHANICE
This a love letter?

Confused by the question, the Bearded Driver pauses and looks at Shanice, who holds the folded paper by a wrinkled corner.

SHANICE (CONT'D)
Is this a love letter?

BEARDED DRIVER
No. It is-

SHANICE
That’s disappointing. It looks like a love letter.

The Latina extends the document.

SHANICE (CONT'D)
Unfold this and give it back to me proper.

BEARDED DRIVER
There is problem?

SHANICE
This-
(she waggles the paper)
-isn't how you treat a official document. Maybe whereever you come from--where kids play in mine fields or whatever--but not here.

Irked, the hirsute fellow reclaims the document, shakes it open and presents it to the seated woman.

SHANICE (CONT'D)
Smooth out the wrinkles so I can read it clear.

The Bearded Driver puts the paper against the back of his truck and irons out the folds with his palm.

SHANICE (CONT'D)
You may turn it in.

After placing the document in the woman's hands, the MUMBLING fellow returns to the rear of his truck, pops the lock and flings the swing latch, CLICK-CLACK-CLACK.

Behind Shanice, a wide metal door slides into the wall, revealing a large freight elevator and two dusty, thirty-year-old CONSTRUCTION WORKERS who wear 'David Enterprises' identity badges. As they push an empty cargo palette across the platform, the Bearded Driver opens the truck.

Inside the vehicle are hundred of iron poles, each of which is three inches in diameter and twelve feet long.

INT. FREIGHT ELEVATOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

The Bearded Driver closes the elevator door and it ascends, bearing him, two Construction Workers and a loaded palette.

BEARDED DRIVER
I hope big woman is here tomorrow.

The other men nod their heads. After a small bump, the elevator stops, and the door recedes into the wall.

INT. 2ND FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The Bearded Driver and the Construction Workers roll the palette of iron poles into the Empire State Building's second floor-- a vast unused space that is illuminated by bare hanging light bulbs. Across the dusty concrete, they push their heavy burden, navigating the thick banks that contain all of the skyscraper's lobby elevators, only five of which have doors on this floor. 'Hard Hats Required' signs hang throughout the interior.

The trio circumvents a CONSTRUCTION WORKER who is seated at a desk and nears a forty-year-old Korean-American man named KWOK, who has silver hair, a long face, thick lips, sleepy eyes, gray clothing, a black tie, a hard hat and a name tag that reads, 'Jeffrey Kwok, Foreman / David Enterprises.'

KWOK
Hold.

SCUFFING their shoes in the grit, the Bearded Driver and the Construction Workers stop the palette.

KWOK (CONT'D)
Did you measure these at the warehouse?

BEARDED DRIVER
Yes.

KWOK
Load in, let the iron reach room temperature and double-check your measurements.

BEARDED DRIVER
Yes sir.

Kwok points north, and the trio leans into the palette.

Titlecard: Liaoning, China

INT. SECURITY CHECK-IN / LIAONING AIRPORT - LATE NIGHT (CST)

Dressed in a charcoal sweater, blue jeans and black boots and holding a backpack, Westermark stands in line at the security check-in of the Liaoning Airport, his dirty-blonde hair and height distinguishing him from the other TRAVELLERS who people the area. After a quick survey of the surroundings, he places his bag, wallet, phone and JINGLING key rings into a gray tray, which he slides toward the x-ray scanner.

INT. GOOD COFFEE SNACKS / LIAONING AIRPORT - MOMENTS LATER

The agent sits in a corner booth of a cafeteria-style eatery that has colorful and geometrically-precise baked goods. Upon the plastic table he sets his backpack and next to it, his key rings. A survey of the area shows him that he is not being monitored by anybody.

Westermark spreads his keys across the table as if they were jigsaw puzzle pieces. With nimble fingers, he SNAPS the interlocking bits together until he is holding the blade of a five-inch knife.

As the agent secrets the weapon beneath his left sleeve, a thought unrelated to work occurs to him for the first time in several hours. He withdraws his cellphone, thumbs a number, puts the receiver to his ear and waits for the beep.

WESTERMARK
Hey Danielle, it's Rhett. It looks like I'll be back in time if you want to go to that opening together. I'm about to board-- I'll call when I get back.

Westermark SNAPS his phone shut, grabs his bag and leaves.

Titlecard: New York City

INT. UTILITY GARAGE / PORT AUTHORITY - MIDNIGHT

A PURRING, black, double-decker Ultrabus with dark windows rolls into a massive Port Authority garage and slides into a space between an abraded wall and a regular bus that is dwarfed by the rolling fortress.

INT. LOWER DECK / BLACK ULTRABUS - SAME

The Bearded Driver who earlier that day delivered iron poles to the Empire State Building stops the vehicle and kills the engine. Sitting behind him in the unlighted lower deck are fifty silent SOLDIERS, able-bodied white, black, Asian, Indian and Arabic men, aged twenty-five to forty-eight, who are dressed in black jeans and sweat shirts. Duffel bags fill the compartments directly above their heads and bulletproof tactical vests lie at their feet.

All of them look at STROMFORD, the broad-chested, crewcut forty-seven-year-old fellow who rises from his seat at the front of the bus. His right ear is a shrivelled walnut and the left side of neck is covered with lightning bolt tattoos.

His blue eyes scan the faces of the Soldiers.

STROMFORD
(Texas Accent)
Every man here was paid to give one hundred percent and that's what I expect. Not seventy-five or even ninety-nine point nine. Is that understood?

The Soldiers nod their heads in affirmation.

STROMFORD (CONT'D)
Sleep if you're able to. If you can't, be quiet so others can.

As the team leader sits, something CLANGS outside the bus.

Stromford selects MIKHAIL, a huge white Soldier with a collapsed nose and a cauliflower ear, and the chosen man rises to his feet.

INT. UTILITY GARAGE / PORT AUTHORITY - SAME

The Bearded Driver opens the door, and the scout enters the utility garage. Another CLANG echoes. Mikhail looks behind the vehicle and sees a rusty dumpster.

A few strides brings him to the bin, which is inhabited by a lean stray cat that has its front paw stuck in a half-full can of ravioli.

MIKHAIL
(Breznian Accent)
Hello little girl.

The man withdraws a hunting knife.

INT. BOTTOM DECK / BLACK ULTRABUS - SAME

Outside the bus, the cat SCREECHES. Stromford places a cellphone to his good ear and nods his head.

STROMFORD
We're parked.

INT. 2ND FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The Korean-American foreman of David Enterprises walks away from the palettes of iron poles, toward three CONSTRUCTION WORKERS who eat Chinese food. Pressed to his right ear is his cellphone.

KWOK
I'll inform 1A.

INT. LARGE DOWNTOWN LOFT WITH EXPOSED BRICK WALLS - SAME

Hawkins and Chatterjee (the long-haired Indian man who inspected the digital projectors) watch a screen that shows PEOPLE running from a dilapidate Eastern European apartment building, carrying their CHILDREN and SCREAMING. Upon the monitor, a bomb EXPLODES.

HAWKINS
This one.

Chatterjee TAPS a space bar, and the image freezes. Petrified upon the screen is a cataract of dust in which the screaming faces of a woman and her son can be discerned.

CHATTERJEE
Shall I-

A BEEP echoes throughout the sparse interior. Hawkins looks at the four cellphones lying upon the table, seizes the one that has the jitters and puts it to his ear.

HAWKINS
Yes?
(he nods)
Good. Commence operations.

EXT. 86TH FLOOR OBSERVATORY / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

A twenty-one-year-old OBSERVATORY GUARD who has a goatee, a long wool coat and gloves walks along the balcony that surrounds the eighty-sixth floor of the Empire State Building, where a score of GUESTS marvel at the intricate and ambitious grid of confusion that is the island of Manhattan at night.

OBSERVATORY GUARD
We're closing up in thirteen minutes! Thirteen more minutes!

Twenty feet from the orbiting employee, a Japanese man inserts a quarter into a tower viewer and presses his eyes to its binoculars. After a derisive GRUNT, he steps back, shakes his head and looks at his wife, who then presses her face to the telescopic device.

JAPANESE WOMAN
Buro-ken?

MALE VOICE
It's broken.

The Japanese man looks at the person who spoke-- a black fellow of thirty-five named CHILDS who has a baby face, dimples, short hair and a navy-blue parka.

JAPANESE MAN
You fix?
(to his wife in Japanese)
Black men fix things here.

Childs points at a tower viewer that is twenty feet away.

CHILDS
Try that one.

Disappointed, the Japanese Man orders his spouse to proceed to the neighboring device, and together they depart.

The baby-faced fellow surveys the balcony, shields the broken tower viewer with his coat, fits a key into its lock and twists it clockwise. A bolt CLACKS.

Quickly, he undoes the opposite latch. It CLACKS. A black line splits the steel body of the machine: It is unlocked.

Carefully, Childs opens the tower viewer door, revealing six loaded Sig-Sauer handguns that are secured to its hollowed-out interior by strong magnets.

OBSERVATORY GUARD (O.S.)
Twelve more minutes!

Childs looks up. Twenty feet away, the Observatory Guard rounds the northwest corner, surveying his domain and exhaling steam.

The baby-faced visitor closes the tower viewer and leans against it. Soon, the goateed employee draws near.

OBSERVATORY GUARD (CONT'D)
That one’s broken.

CHILDS
Oh. Thanks.

OBSERVATORY GUARD
Sure. There was an ‘Out of Order’ sign, but some idiot stole it.

CHILDS
People are fools.

OBSERVATORY GUARD
Yeah.
(he shakes his head)
I bet I see that shit on ebay tomorrow.

Childs CHUCKLES (believably, though not earnestly) as the Observatory Guard passes by and disappears around the southwest corner.

OBSERVATORY GUARD (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Eleven minutes!

Quickly, the baby-faced fellow opens the viewer, seizes four pistols, stuffs them inside his parka and ZIPS up. The remaining pair of guns wind up in his hands, which he slips into his front pockets.

Toward the south side of the balcony, he proceeds, carrying six firearms, passing by a kissing COUPLE, an OLD MAN, a SKETCH ARTIST with dirty fingertips, a LATINA and a TEENAGE GIRL who is taking pictures of herself.

Presently, Childs reaches the southwest corner, stops and looks east. A WHITE MAN wearing jeans and a bulging black parka looks over at him and nods.

OBSERVATORY GUARD (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Ten minutes!

Childs dons a hood that has a blurry, black-and-white checkerboard pattern, which confuses the eye. Across the way, his associate pulls a similar cloth over his head.

The hooded men point their pistols at the floor. Muzzles CRACK, eliciting YELPS from startled Guests, who then turn to face the gunmen.

CHILDS
Hands in the air!

HOODED WHITE MAN
Hands in the air!

Frightened people raise their hands, except for the Sketch Artist, who flees.

INT. HALL OF THE 86TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The fellow scrambles into a bright marble hallway that contains two banks of elevators and a THIRD HOODED MAN who points a gun at him, while keeping his other weapon trained on the two frightened SECURITY GUARDS who already have their hands raised.

SKETCH ARTIST
Don’t!

THIRD HOODED MAN
Hands up.

Trembling, the Sketch Artist raises his ten dirty digits.

EXT. 86TH FLOOR OBSERVATORY / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Childs tosses a bundle of plastic handcuffs onto the floor and points a gun at the Teenage Girl whose favorite photographic subject is herself.

CHILDS
Distribute those.

Lights sparkling in her wet eyes, the young woman picks up the restraints and turns toward her fellow captives.

On the east side of the observatory, the hooded White Man tosses a bundle of plastic handcuffs to the ground and points a gun at the face of a thirty-year-old Dominican Woman.

WHITE MAN
Distribute those.

The selected distributor walks forward. Ten feet behind her, the goateed Observatory Guard looks up at a mounted security camera and mouths the words, ‘Help us.’

INT. THE NEST (SECURITY BOOTH) / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The Nest is a HUMMING brick room that is filled with monitors, XLR patch-cord banks and multicolored telephones. Sitting in rolling chairs at the main console are three SECURITY GUARDS in beige uniforms who watch gray-green screens that show various areas throughout the Empire State Building. Currently, the plump fellow on the right leans forward and toggles a switch up and down, his eyes locked on an image of people who have their hands raised.

PLUMP GUARD
Guys. Take a look the observatory.

As the skinny man in the middle looks over, the guard named BRANISLAV reaches under the console.

SKINNY GUARD
Looks like a situation.

Something SNAPS, and the Russian-American rolls away from the table, holding a pistol in his right hand. Disbelief flashes upon the faces of his coworkers.

SKINNY GUARD (CONT'D)
Branislav?

PLUMP GUARD
What the hell are-

BRANISLAV
(Russian accent)
Hands in the air.

Hands raised, the Skinny Guard looks at his porcine peer.

SKINNY GUARD
He’s a goddamn terrorist.

PLUMP GUARD
I told them, “Don’t hire a guy named Branislav,” but did they l-

BRANISLAV
Quiet or I’ll shoot.

The men are quiet. From his pocket, Branislav withdraws four pairs of plastic handcuffs.

BRANISLAV (CONT'D)
Wrists and ankles.

INT. 80TH FLOOR TRANSFER / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The rotund Latina Shanice (from the loading dock) and two male SECURITY GUARDS stand in the brightly-illuminated transfer hallway where elevators go up to the observatory and down to the lobby.

SHANICE
Can’t wait to get out of here. My feet feel like headaches.

A light brightens beside a lift, and its door opens, revealing two levelled guns that are held by the hooded assailant Childs.

SHANICE (CONT'D)
Don’t shoot!

CHILDS
Hands in the air.

SHANICE
We will.

All three Security Guards raise their hands. Shanice looks into the elevator behind Childs and sees the bound wrists of eight observatory Guests who are pressed against the wall.

EXT. 5TH AVENUE BETWEEN 33RD AND 34TH STREET - SAME

Six CONSTRUCTION WORKERS wearing badges that identify them as employees of David Enterprises erect metal barricades on the north and south ends of the sidewalk, outside the only open entrance of the Empire State Building.

INT. LOBBY (5TH AVE. ENTRANCE) / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Two heavy brass-and-glass revolving doors spin and from them stride two CHINESE MEN, wearing long trench coats and black baseball caps that shade their faces. Across the marble, toward the front desk they proceed, hastily, their heads titled forward, their hands in their pockets. A young LOBBY GUARD and his elder superior stop their conversation and look at the approaching duo.

OLDER LOBBY GUARD
The building’s closed.

FOOTFALLS resound throughout the marble interior as the distance between the front desk and the Mandarins diminishes.

OLDER LOBBY GUARD (CONT'D)
You’ll have to come back tomorrow.

The intruders draw shotguns through slit pockets and aim at pale faces. Surrendering, the Lobby Guards raise their hands.

EXT. 5TH AVENUE BETWEEN 33RD AND 34TH STREET - SAME

The black Ultrabus parks on Fifth Avenue, directly in front of the Empire State Building. Once the vehicle's lights go dark, its front door opens, HISSING.

Four Soldiers emerge from the bus, carrying duffel bags. A moment after they pass through the revolving doors, four more men follow.

INT. LOBBY (5TH AVE. ENTRANCE) / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Pulling checkered hoods over their faces, the Soldiers walk between stanchions, toward the front desk where one of the Chinese intruders sits, dressed in a security uniform. FOOTFALLS are the only sounds within the vast marble lobby.

The revolving door spins, admitting more Soldiers, including Mikhail (the cat killer) and Stromford, the leathery team leader with lightning bolts on his neck and one good ear. After a brief survey of the area, the Texan draws a pistol, proceeds to a blind corner, takes a penny from his pocket and flings it north.

INT. LOBBY (34TH ST. ENTRANCE) / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Copper flashes through the air, and the coin CLINKS against a marble wall, garnering the attention of the second Chinese intruder. Presently, the Mandarin tosses a penny east.

INT. LOBBY (5TH AVE. ENTRANCE) / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The answer CLINKS against the east wall. Stromford turns in the opposite direction and tosses a penny, which CLINKS against the marble. A moment latter, his signal is answered by the CLINK of another coin.

Satisfied, the Texan motions south, where he leads a phalanx of fifteen hooded Soldiers.

INT. ELEVATOR BANKS / LOBBY / EMPIRES STATE BUILDING - SAME

Stromford and his men reach the first hall, which contains the elevators that go to floors 6-19. Quickly, two hooded Soldiers leap the turnstiles and proceed up the passage, pressing the call buttons as they go, CLICK, CLICK, CLICK...

FOOTFALLS echo as the team leader hastens toward the second bisecting hall. There, two hooded Soldiers detach, vault the turnstiles and press the call buttons for the elevators that go to floors 1-6, CLICK, CLICK, CLICK...

The phalanx continues, and four men enter a wider bisecting hall, where they split into two groups, CLICKING buttons, jumping turnstiles and summoning all of the elevators that go to floors 24-41 and 55-67.

Soon the remaining Soldiers enter the final hall, divide into two pairs and press the call buttons for the elevators that go to floors 41-55 & 67-80.

Throughout the vast marble lobby, doors open, revealing empty elevator after empty elevator.

As Stromford strides toward the door labelled, 'Emergency Exit / Stairwell,' he flips open his cellphone, thumbs a number and places the receiver to his good ear.

STROMFORD
All elevators are in the lobby.

INT. 2ND FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Kwok SNAPS his cellphone shut and looks at the three Construction Workers who stand beside the palettes of twelve-foot-long iron poles.

KWOK
Now.

The Korean-American tears a cardboard sign that reads, 'Hard Hats Required,' from the elevator shaft wall, revealing a deep hole that is a just over three inches in diameter. Two men raise an iron pole, insert its tip into the aperture and push deep. Steel GRATES against stone. On the opposite side of the elevator shaft, a safety sign POPS loose, and the rod emerges.

Kwok swings a sledgehammer. Metal CLANKS against metal, bending the pole. The Korean-American walks to the other side of the shaft and swings again. Metal CLANKS metal. Bent at both ends, the iron pole is fixed in place.

Construction Workers tear down more signs, revealing more holes.

INT. ELEVATOR SHAFT (BANK 6-19)/ EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Filthy yellow lights shine upon the wires, cobwebs, bricks and support beams that comprise the interior of the elevator shaft. Iron poles slide across the open space into apertures on the far side.

KWOK (O.S.)
Quickly. All of them except the ones that are marked.

INT. COMMON AREA / 67TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The ambient light of New York City dully illuminates the Empire State Building's sixty-seventh floor, which is a wide open space that has eight structural pillars and a few pieces of abandoned furniture. Childs and three hooded Soldiers withdraw fire extinguishers from a closet and walk toward the windows, circumventing the forty-nine anxious and handcuffed CAPTIVES who sit on the ratty rug.

OBSERVATORY GUARD
What're you g-

A boot CRACKS the goateed fellow's nose, precluding the remainder of his inquiry.

CHILDS
No questions.

Childs and his associates reach the windows, where they SNAP the safety rings from their fire extinguishers, aim the spouts and squeeze. Nozzles HISS, covering Manhattan with dripping black paint.

EXT. BALCONY / DANIELLE'S APARTMENT - 2 AM

Sitting on her balcony and wearing an overcoat atop her pajamas, Danielle ruminates as she drinks from a bulb of red wine. The city and park are uncommonly quiet.

Decided, the museum director sets the glass down, picks up her cellphone and selects a number. Westermark's face shows upon the screen. After listening to his outgoing message, she draws a breath and begins.

DANIELLE
Hey, I know you're in the air right now, but I wanted to say something so you could think about it before we talked.

Anxious, Danielle arranges her thoughts, finds her resolve and presses forward.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
I really like you. And I thought you felt the same way about me, but what you said the other day--that I could go out with another man--that was surprising. I know we haven't discussed anything serious--we're both so busy with our careers and just having fun together--but I didn't really know what to say when you said that.
(she shakes her head)
And it hurt.
(MORE)

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
(her eyes shine)
I'd be upset if I found out you were seeing somebody else--though maybe you are--and I'd feel weird going out with some other man. So I suppose that's it-- I want us to be exclusive, committed at some level.
(she rubs her forehead)
Maybe I shouldn't leave all of this in a message, but I couldn't sleep until I said it-- it was just circling in my head. So let's talk about things when you get back, okay? Have- have a safe flight.

The woman withdraws the phone from her ear, CLICKS the disconnect button and reaches trembling fingers toward her bulb of wine, uncertain what affect her message will have.

Titlecard: Los Angeles

INT. INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT TERMINAL AT LAX - 4:04 AM (PST)

Weary first class PASSENGERS enter the teal terminal and walk past an announcement screen that reads, 'Arrival: Flight 29 from Liaoning Status: On Time.' At the rear of the group is the Eldest Son of Longwei, whose scintillating blue suit was wrinkled during the long flight.

Currently, the Chinese fellow looks at the airport signs, descries one that reads, 'Restrooms,' and strides toward it. As his palm presses into the men's room door, Westermark emerges from the plane.

INT. BATHROOM / AIRPORT TERMINAL AT LAX - SAME

The Eldest Son of Longwei walks into the gray bathroom, looks around and sees that it is empty, except for the Mexican-American JANITOR who SIGHS pleasurably as he releases fluid into a urinal. Satisfied that there are no threats, the Chinese man proceeds into a stall, shuts the door and slides the bolt, CLACK. A moment later, the Janitor washes his hands and departs.

Westermark enters, twists the lock, surveys the area and sees the glossy shoes of his quarry. After setting his backpack in the adjacent stall, he closes the door, puts a magnet to the jamb and slides the bolt, locking it from the outside.

Silence spreads throughout the room.

Readied, the agent sets the magnet on the door of the inhabited stall, slides the bolt and kicks.

The Eldest Son of Longwei leaps up from the toilet, SHOUTING, his pants down around his ankles. Westermark shoves a sock into the Chinese man's mouth, SMACKS his forehead against metal and pushes him back into the stall.

The agent closes the door, bolts it, FLUSHES the toilet and grabs the back of his quarry's head. Water drains, and Westermark SMACKS the man's face against hard porcelain, CRACKING bones and cartilage.

The agent whips his knife from his sleeve and saws across his quarry's throat. Blood fills the basin.

In silent agony, the Eldest Son kicks the ground.

Water returns, diluting the gore, and the agent FLUSHES once again. The toilet sucks blood, arteries and veins from the dying man's neck.

Presently, Westermark handcuffs the Eldest Son's hands to a pipe, pulls up his iridescent slacks and arranges his legs so that it looks as if he is not a corpse, but a retching man.

Below his tilted head, arteries and veins waver in the water like crimson seaweed.

The agent puts his eye to the jamb, sees nobody and hoists himself over the dividing wall into the adjacent stall, where he earlier placed his backpack. There, he pulls off his skin-colored gloves and FLUSHES them.

INT. SAVOR FRESCA / AIRPORT TERMINAL AT LAX - LATER

Wearing different clothes (blue jeans and a black button-up shirt), Westermark sits in a dim corner of a cheerless Mexican restaurant where breakfast burritos are inserted into YAWNING mouths. There, he scans the terminal passageway that lies beyond the festive decorations. No passersby cause him any concern.

From his pocket, he withdraws his cellphone. The screen reads, 'You have 1 message from Danielle N.'

Watching his surroundings, Westermark listens to the message.

After a few seconds, Danielle's late night soliloquy garners the major part of his attention.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Flight thirty-two fifty-four to JFK, New York is now boarding.

Westermark rises from his chair, dons his backpack and walks toward the passageway, listening to his phone, surprised by what he hears and uncertain what his response will be.

Titlecard: New York City

INT. LOBBY / THE SUPERNAL (CONDOMINIUM BUILDING) - 5 AM

Slacks, black sneakers and a cashmere sweater adorn the seventy-three-year-old early-riser named MR. WALLMAN who walks across the pristine white marble lobby of The Supernal. Soon, he nears the front entrance, which is held open by a smiling LATIN DOORMAN.

LATIN DOORMAN
G'morning Mr. Wallman.

MR. WALLMAN
Good morning Javier. You seem happy today.

LATIN DOORMAN
I keep a smile in every pocket.
(he pats his pants)
You gonna walk the whole way?

MR. WALLMAN
Certainly. It's a fine autumn morning.

LATIN DOORMAN
Don't catch cold.

MR. WALLMAN
I shan't.

The septuagenarian strides into the quiet, violescent city and glances at his watch, which reads 5:01 AM. A lone shiver traverses his body.

MR. WALLMAN (CONT'D)
Hmph!

Resolved, he walks south.

EXT. 34TH STREET OFF OF 5TH AVENUE - 5:54 AM

After a glance at his watch which shows that the time is six minutes to six, Mr. Wallman salutes the Empire State Building, where he has turned large sums of money into far larger sums for one year more than four decades. As he draws near the side entrance, his brow furrows. A sign that reads, 'Door Closed. Enter on 5th Avenue,' hangs on each revolving door as well as the emergency exit. Behind the glass, the north quadrant of the lobby is dark.

MR. WALLMAN
What nonsense is this?

After patting his forehead with a silk handkerchief, the aged fellow proceeds east.

EXT. 5TH AVENUE BETWEEN 33RD AND 34TH STREET - SAME

Mr. Wallman rounds the corner and rambles down the Fifth Avenue sidewalk, which is no longer cordoned off by metal barricades. Ahead of him stands the main entrance.

MR. WALLMAN
Hmph!

INT. LOBBY / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

A heavy revolving doors turns, admitting Mr. Wallman. Toward the Chinese intruder who is seated behind the front desk, the aged fellow proceeds, thinking thoughts and waggling his right index finger.

MR. WALLMAN
The door at this entrance is in need of lubrications.

CHINESE MAN
I'll tell my supervisor.

MR. WALLMAN
Copious lubrications.

CHINESE MAN
I'll tell my supervisor.

MR. WALLMAN
Do that please.

The septuagenarian withdraws his elevator card and rounds the blind corner, where a hooded Soldier points a machine gun at his face.

MR. WALLMAN (CONT'D)
Security!

A second man pulls the old fellow's arms to his tailbone and handcuffs him.

MR. WALLMAN (CONT'D)
Secur-

A fist CRACKS Mr. Wallman's cheek, splitting the skin.

HOODED SOLDIER
(Arabic accent)
Quiet or we'll break you.

The second man grabs the aged fellow by the shirt collar and escorts him through a broken turnstile to the elevator bank that services floors 55-67. There, another hooded Soldier guards an open lift in which stand seven handcuffed CAPTIVES who face the wall with their heads down.

INT. ELEVATOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

A SOB of fear escapes Mr. Wallman as he is shoved inside the elevator. Two hooded Soldiers follow behind him, and the one on the right presses the number, ‘67.’

The steel door closes, and the walls RUMBLE. As the lift rises, blood descends the septuagenarian’s left cheek.

Ten seconds later, the elevator slows, shakes and opens. Mr. Wallman looks over his shoulder, and his stomach sinks at what he sees...

INT. COMMON AREA / 67TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Little flecks of gray light sneak through the painted windows of the sixty-seventh floor, illuminating the one hundred-and-ninety-two CAPTIVES who sit on the ratty rug, bruised, bound and frightened, guarded by eight hooded SOLDIERS who carry AK-47 machine guns and wear bulletproof tactical vests.

INT. ELEVATOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - LATER

A handcuffed HISPANIC WOMAN is shoved into an elevator, alongside seven other CAPTIVES. Two Soldiers succeed her, and the one on the right presses the button ‘66.’ As the elevator rises, tears pool, catch black mascara and spill down the Latina’s cheeks like squid ink.

The walls RUMBLE, and the door recedes. All of the Captives are shoved outside.

INT. MAIN AREA / 66TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - LATER

The Hispanic Woman and her seven peers stumble onto the sixty-sixth floor, which has nine rented offices, an open main area and black paint over all of its exterior windows. Eight hooded SOLDIERS with AK-47 machine guns and bulletproof tactical vests monitor the three hundred and twenty-eight CAPTIVES who sit on the floor, handcuffed and frightened.

HISPANIC WOMAN
No.

The tallest of the masked captors points at JENNIFER, a petite twenty-three-year-old redhead who has a bruised face and translucent braces. She is the only unbound prisoner on the entire floor.

HOODED SOLDIER
Collect them.

The selected individual approaches the Hispanic Woman and reaches into her purse.

JENNIFER
S-s-sorry.

Jennifer drops the Latina's gold cellphone into a water-filled bucket, where it PLUNKS against the surface and sinks toward its many drowned peers.

INT. CENTRAL AREA / 65TH FLOOR / ESB - LATER

Half of the suites on the sixty-fifth floor are rented to European, Arabic and Indian businesses. In the central hall outside the burnished doors sit five hundred and ten CAPTIVES whose wrists are bound by plastic. Monitoring them are twelve hooded SOLDIERS with AK-47 machine guns.

A nineteen-year-old delivery boy of Asian and African descent who wears blue sweatpants, a matching hoodie and a gold chain that reads, 'NATHANIEL' looks at his captors.

NATHANIEL
Excuse me, Mr. Terrorist. I need to squirt.

A hooded Soldier points at CINDY, a petite twenty-seven-year-old woman who is the only unbound captive on the floor.

HOODED SOLDIER
(Chinese accent)
Help him.
(to Nathaniel)
If you do not return in four minutes-

The hooded Soldier points the barrel of his AK-47 at the stomach of a PREGNANT WOMAN. Fear shines in the eyes of the expectant mother.

NATHANIEL
Don't think I gotta go no more.

INT. DIRECTOR'S OFFICE / MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCE - SAME

Danielle walks over to her office couch and hands Mrs. Feinberg a cup of tea. Cradling the beverage, the old woman expels a gust of air.

DANIELLE
Is this a bad idea?

MRS. FEINBERG
If it goes well, it's wonderfully bold.
(she SIPS)
If it goes poorly, it's humorous denouement.

DANIELLE
That’s reassuring.

Ruminating, the museum director looks at the aquarium. Behind the glass, the sea horses swim in slow circles.

INT. TAXI VAN - MOMENTS LATER

Danielle sits in the back of a taxi van that is owned by its ARABIC DRIVER and leans toward an opening in the partition.

DANIELLE
JFK Airport. Arrivals.

EXT. 5TH AVENUE BETWEEN 33RD AND 34TH STREET - SAME

A black sedan parks in front of the Empire State Building. From the back of the car step Hawkins, wearing sunglasses, a bowler hat and a brown suit, and Chatterjee, dressed in olive linen garments. Together, they walk toward the entrance.

INT. LOBBY / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

A revolving door spins, admitting the pockmarked leader and his technician. The Chinese fellow who pretends to be a security guard nods his head at his superiors.

Hawkins and Chatterjee pass the front desk and round the blind corner, where they meet Stromford, who is flanked by two hooded Soldiers carrying AK-47 machine guns.

STROMFORD
Sir.

HAWKINS
Colonel.
(he pockets his sunglasses and discards his hat)
What’s the count?

STROMFORD
One thousand, eight hundred thirty-two.

HAWKINS
Any incidents?

STROMFORD
None.

Chatterjee’s eyes flicker to the walnut that is the remainder of the Texan’s right ear.

STROMFORD (CONT'D)
You’re about to get slapped.

The technician averts his gaze. After a hard look, Stromford returns his attention to Hawkins.

HAWKINS
Proceed until you reach the figure.

STROMFORD
Yessir. Your station's ready.

HAWKINS
Thank you.

Hawkins and Chatterjee pull checkered hoods over their faces and are escorted by a Soldier past elevators that contain bound CAPTIVES to an empty lift, which they enter. As the door closes, Stromford picks up a two-way radio and CLICKS the talk bar.

STROMFORD
1A is in the building.

INT. COMMON AREA / 67TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Monitoring eleven hundred bound CAPTIVES are fifteen hooded SOLDIERS who have machine guns and tactical vests. A light blinks on the north wall, and an elevator door opens, admitting Hawkins and Chatterjee.

Nearby, Mr. Wallman, the security woman Shanice and the goateed Observatory Guard whose nose was broken watch the two well-dressed, hooded fellows proceed to a red door marked, 'Emergency Exit / Stairwell.'

Upon the painted steel, Chatterjee KNOCKS thrice. The door opens, revealing two stairwell SENTRIES who sit on the landing beside a mounted M240 machine gun that has a two-hundred-round ammunition belt dangling from its side.

MR. WALLMAN
(whispered)
It's like a war.

Once the emergency exit closes, Childs walks over to Mr. Wallman and KICKS his throat. Witnesses YELP and look away.

CHILDS
(loudly to the group)
Unless you are asking us to go to the bathroom, you are not allowed to talk.
(he points at the oldster)
This man broke the rules, so he'll become the first example.

The Soldier seizes the GASPING septuagenarian by the collar.

INT. EMERGENCY EXIT STAIRWELL / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Hawkins and Chatterjee climb the stairwell and reach the sixty-eighth floor landing, where two SENTRIES are stationed beside another mounted M240 machine gun.

INT. MAIN HALL / 68TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The pockmarked black leader and the Indian technician walk into a well-lighted oaken hall that runs the length of the sixty-eighth floor. At the far end, an ASIAN SOLDIER guards an open elevator.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM / 68TH FLOOR / ESB - SAME

Hawkins and Chatterjee enter a wide, windowless conference room where a crewcut, freckled twenty-nine-year-old with one arm and the name COLORADO monitors eleven laptop computers. After CLICKING on the overhead fans, the Indian technician closes the door and twists the bolt, CLACK.

COLORADO
All systems are online.

The leader pulls his checkered hood from his pockmarked face and surveys the set-up and nods. Presently, he withdraws a small framed picture of his two sons and sets it upon the large oval table.

INT. AIRPLANE - JUST BEFORE NOON

The buckled-in PASSENGERS who fill the coach section of the airplane watch the rising tarmac, except for Westermark, who sits beside the aisle near the front, observing people from underneath his sunglasses.

Silence spreads throughout the cabin. A moment later, the aircraft RUMBLES, touching the runway. Flaps extrude from the wings, and gradually, the plane slows.

PILOT (O.S.)
Welcome to the John F. Kennedy Airport, New York City. It is ten minutes to twelve, and the temperature is forty-four degrees.

INT. GATE 21 / JFK AIRPORT - MOMENTS LATER

Expelling Los Angeles air into the New York atmosphere, bedraggled Passengers disembark from the flight and enter an airport terminal that has turquoise rugs and light blue walls. Amongst the PEOPLE who watch the west coast arrivals is Danielle, anxiously gripping her tall cup of chai.

Currently, Westermark emerges from the jet bridge, carrying his backpack and scanning the area. His even strides slow when he sees who awaits him.

DANIELLE
Hi!

After a quick appraisal of the terminal, the agent approaches the museum director.

WESTERMARK
Is something wrong?

DANIELLE
No.
(she throws her drink in the garbage)
I brought a yogurt muffin.

Westermark watches Danielle withdraw a CRACKLING brown bag from her purse. Smiling, he accepts the offering and kisses her lips.

WESTERMARK
Thank you.

DANIELLE
I wanted to talk. And I didn't want to leave another message or get another message.

WESTERMARK
Okay. But not here.

A worrisome thought occurs to Danielle.

DANIELLE
You're not still-
(quietly)
-working, are you? I didn't think-

WESTERMARK
A muffin's worth a certain amount of risk.

Relieved, the woman grins.

The agent gestures toward the main passageway.

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
Please...

INT. MAIN PASSAGE / TERMINAL / JFK AIRPORT - SAME

Danielle and Westermark step onto a moving sidewalk in the middle of the terminal and proceed like slow wizards.

DANIELLE
Whoever invented the slidewalk should get a trophy. A moving trophy.
(she inspects the agent)
Do you have luggage?

WESTERMARK
Nothing round-trip. Tell me about your presentation.

DANIELLE
Are you asking because you really want to know or because you don't want to talk about serious stuff yet?

WESTERMARK
Both.

DANIELLE
Let's find someplace to sit down and talk.

The agent notices fifteen PEOPLE gathered around a television set that shows an image of the Empire State Building.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)
Okay?

WESTERMARK
Hold on.

Westermark hastens to the end of the moving sidewalk. Danielle follows, perplexed by his behavior.

As the agent nears the television, he takes off his sunglasses for the first time in six hours. Overhead, the image of the Empire State Building is replaced by a shot of its Fifth Avenue entrance, which is closed and dark.

Westermark turns to his neighbor, a CURLY-HAIRED FELLOW who wears a New York Giants jersey.

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
What's going on at the Empire State?

CURLY-HAIRED FELLOW
It's locked up.

A somber, silver-haired NEWS ANCHOR appears on the screen, garnering the agent's attention.

NEWS ANCHOR
No lights are on inside the lobby, and all of the outer windows on the sixty-fifth, sixty-sixth and sixty-seventh floors have been painted black.

The News Anchor's face is replaced by a shot that pans across the utterly opaque windows of the landmark's sixty-fifth, sixty-sixth and sixty-seventh stories.

A sickness fills Westermark's guts, and Danielle grows apprehensive. Overhead, the News Anchor returns.

NEWS ANCHOR (CONT'D)
Nothing has been heard from any of the estimated three thousand nine hundred people who have entered the building today.

DANIELLE
Oh God.

Unsettled MURMURS ripple through the crowd.

The agent's blood goes cold.

NEWS ANCHOR
We do not yet know if this is a hostage situation or if it relates to the president's presence in New York City, but the Mayor and Chief of Police are currently in discussions.

More and more PEOPLE gather around the airport television.

Danielle takes Westermark's hand and looks at him with frightened eyes. The agent withdraws his arm and returns the brown bag.

WESTERMARK
I need to go.

DANIELLE
Okay. We'll talk later.

WESTERMARK
We don't need to.

The museum director is stunned by the remark.

DANIELLE
What?

WESTERMARK
I can't do this. With you. With anyone.

Incredulous, Danielle shakes her head.

DANIELLE
So...that's it then? For us?

WESTERMARK
That's it.

Westermark turns away, proceeds to the escalator and sinks into the ground. Frustrated, Danielle flings the unopened bag into the garbage can and looks at the television.

NEWS ANCHOR
-is being cordoned off.

EXT. 5TH AVENUE BETWEEN 33RD AND 34TH STREET - 1:22 PM

POLICE OFFICERS stand behind metal barricades on either end of the block, waving away hundreds of curious PEDESTRIANS who look up at the Empire State Building. One of the law enforcers on the north side is Gonzalez, the muscular and mustached former fireman who was with Westermark in Brooklyn on 9/11. Standing beside him is his partner, KARYN, a tall and athletic thirty-two-year-old black woman who waves a baton at the gaping locals.

KARYN
Keep going!
(she swats the air)
Now!

GONZALEZ
Move it or she'll get angry.

OBSERVANT PEDESTRIAN
She's already angry.

GONZALEZ
This is like a match compared to the sun.

The observant fellow joins the multitude heading east while Officers Gonzalez and Karyn wave batons and utter warnings.

Across the street from the darkened entrances stand fifteen OFFICERS of a Special Weapons And Tactics team who are outfitted with helmets, infrared goggles, modular tactical vests, assault rifles, handguns and battering rams. They look south. Walking toward them is a short square man of fifty who has similar gear and a weathered face that looks like a canyon map. His name is CAPTAIN ROSS.

CAPTAIN ROSS
Don't salute.

The superior officer reaches his team and pokes a toothpick in-between his dry lips.

CAPTAIN ROSS (CONT'D)
Rather not be the bullseye.

Small smiles play upon the mouths of the twelve men and three women whom he commands.

CAPTAIN ROSS (CONT'D)
Chief just got approval for us to recon the lobby.

The SWAT team accepts the information. Adjusting his toothpick, Captain Ross takes a moment to eyeball his unit. Pleased, he nods.

CAPTAIN ROSS (CONT'D)
This is the day we've trained for. Three thousand-nine hundred civilians-

FEMALE SWAT MEMBER
Pardon me, sir. There-
(she points)
The windows.

Captain Ross and his team look over. Bedsheets are being pulled down behind the windows all along the off-white, five-story base of the Empire State Building. Presently, the eastern face of this bottom tier becomes a uniform pale swath that is sixty feet high and two hundred and fifty feet wide.

FEMALE SWAT MEMBER (CONT'D)
Captain?

CAPTAIN ROSS
Unless I get a contrary order, we're still-

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Captain!

A gulch appears on Captain Ross's face.

CAPTAIN ROSS
(muttered)
Mule nuts.

The rugose leader takes his toothpick from his mouth and looks in the direction of the caller, a tall and pale fellow in a green suit who lacks eyebrows and is the LIAISON for the Chief of Police.

LIAISON
The chief wants you to hold-

CAPTAIN ROSS
Does Chief or does the mayor?

LIAISON
The mayor ordered for-

CAPTAIN ROSS
Figured. I'll call in and-

Something garners the attentions of Captain Ross and every single person along Fifth Avenue. Glaring in bright red upon the off-white base of the Empire State Building as if it were an enormous movie screen are the words, 'Do Not Enter.'

The team leader looks in the opposite direction, scans facades and locates the glowing sixth-story windows of the suite that houses the digital movie projectors. On the floor below, he sees four massive speakers that are held in place by iron gates.

CAPTAIN ROSS (CONT'D)
Hold anyone that comes outta there-

Captain Ross points at the metal door in-between the bank and the hot dog shop; four members of the SWAT team detach. As they cross the avenue, hundreds of civilians GASP and MURMUR.

The team leader looks at the base of the Empire State Building, where the words 'Do Not Enter' have been replaced by an enormous still image of seven AMERICAN SOLDIERS who lie dead in a pile of rubble, covered with dust and gore.

The gruesome tableau is superseded by an image of President Brownley, standing at a podium below banners that read, 'Brownley & Jenson in '08.'

PRESIDENT BROWNLEY
(Ohio accent)
I will keep my promise to the American people and end the war in Breznia. That is why you elected me-

That tableau is replaced by the image of people running from a dilapidate Eastern European apartment building, SHOUTING, carrying their children. A bomb EXPLODES, and the image freezes. Petrified upon the enormous screen is a cataract of dust in which the screaming faces of a woman and her son can be discerned.

The image is replaced by a shot of the victorious president at his podium.

PRESIDENT BROWNLEY (CONT'D)
I will keep my promise to the American people and end the war in Breznia. That-

Brownley is interrupted by footage of four manacled AMERICAN SOLDIERS being beaten to death in an airplane hangar by furious BREZNIAN SOLDIERS.

Then, a grainy telephoto image of an Eastern European GIRL weeping beside the corpse of her blasted mother is replaced by the shot of the smiling president.

PRESIDENT BROWNLEY (CONT'D)
I will keep my promise-

Brownley's statement is precluded by a silent shot of a military funeral in America in which a destroyed WIDOW presses her face to the cool surface of a coffin. For five long seconds, the woman's grief paints an entire city block.

The image disappears.

AMPLIFIED DISTORTED VOICE
Today, President Brownley will commence a full withdrawal of our troops from Breznia and turn himself over to us.

The words echo around Officers Gonzalez and Karyn, the SWAT team and thousands of others, all of whom are stunned.

GONZALEZ
(quietly)
Americans are doing this?

INT. O'FINN'S PUB - SAME

Westermark watches the event unfold upon a television in a crowded Irish pub, alongside PATRONS, WAITERS and a BARKEEP. Above a yellow subtitle that reads 'Live from ESB' is the stunned Fifth Avenue crowd that stands outside of the Empire State Building.

AMPLIFIED DISTORTED VOICE
Once we have achieved our goals, we will turn ourselves in. There need be no loss of life.

A huge clock showing the time 5 PM appears on the off-white base of the Empire State Building.

AMPLIFIED DISTORTED VOICE (CONT'D)
The President has until five o'clock today to do what we require of him.

The clock is replaced by a grainy video image of a thousand bound CAPTIVES.

AMPLIFIED DISTORTED VOICE (CONT'D)
Failure to do so will result in one execution every thirty minutes until our demands are met.

Throughout the Irish bar, people shake their heads, MURMUR and CURSE. Westermark ruminates, his mind in the darkest place. Upon the television, the words, 'Do Not Enter' reappear on the off-white base of the Empire State Building.

The agent decides upon a plan of action and withdraws from the establishment.

INT. RECEIVING AREA / INTELLIGENCE OFFICE AT THE NYPD - LATER

Westermark hastens from an elevator into a Central Intelligence Agency office that is located inside a New York City Police Department. Seated at a faux-wood front desk is a busy twenty-six-year-old Indian-American RECEPTIONIST who holds two phones and reads from a notepad while typing.

WESTERMARK
Where-

RECEPTIONIST
Conference room B.

WESTERMARK
Thanks.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM B / INTELLIGENCE OFFICE AT NYPD - SAME

Westermark enters a conference room that is inhabited by a cadaverous, sixty-three-year-old man in gray named PORTER and four AGENTS-- two white fellows, a Korean-American woman and Adib. All of them sit at a large wooden table, working on their laptop computers, underneath a silent television that shows the Empire State Building. Currently, the new arrival shuts the door and looks at the ranking man.

WESTERMARK
Where are we?

PORTER
Brownley issued a statement to the press that he refuses to deal with terrorists. A little while after, the mayor decided to send in a negotiator.

Westermark frowns.

WESTERMARK
These people don’t want to talk.

ADIB
Even if we get James Earl Jones?

Porter glares at the Arabic agent.

ADIB (CONT'D)
What? I don’t think Sinatra is well.

PORTER
This isn’t a time for jokes.

ADIB
Tell that to the guy sending in a negotiator.

WESTERMARK
What’re we doing besides research?

ADIB
That’d be research.

WESTERMARK
That’s it?

Irritation plays upon the ranking man’s face, and he calms himself before he speaks.

PORTER
I know you’re a wetwork guy, but this is a CIA division, not a SWAT team or- or a hit squad. We’re intelligence. And this-
(he SLAPS the television screen)
-this is a failure on our part. An enormous one. Something this big wasn’t planned in an afternoon, and we should’ve gotten a whiff of it. But we didn’t.
(he shakes his head)
The time for us to run things was yesterday and before. Now we help however we can.

Porter points a bony index finger at a laptop computer.

PORTER (CONT'D)
Dig. Find intel. You want some wetwork?-- there’re plenty of roaches in the bathroom you can step on.

Frustrated, Westermark sits in a rolling chair.

EXT. 5TH AVENUE BETWEEN 33RD AND 34TH STREET - 3:28 PM

Officers Gonzalez and Karyn escort a handsome white man who has a trustworthy face, a megaphone and the name SHINER through the north barricade onto the cordoned-off avenue.

GONZALEZ
Bro. You an actor or something?

SHINER
A detective with a few too many psych degrees.

The muscular Mexican-American is impressed.

CAPTAIN ROSS (O.S.)
Shiner!

Shiner turns around, sees Captain Ross and shakes his hand. Once they release each other, the SWAT leader nods at the hundred-and-two story building.

CAPTAIN ROSS (CONT'D)
You think you'll be able to sway them?

SHINER
If the goals of the group are limited to what they've stated, and if there's a single guy in charge, and if I get to talk to him directly, there's a very, very, very small chance.

Shiner activates his bullhorn, pulls the trigger and TAPS the microphone. An amplified THUD resounds.

CAPTAIN ROSS
Good luck.

Slowly, the negotiator walks toward the building entrance.

The words, 'Do Not Enter' appear in red upon the vast off-white canvas.

Shiner stops in the exact middle of Fifth Avenue, clears his throat and raises the bullhorn to his mouth.

SHINER
(amplified)
I'm not going to enter.
(he lets his words echo)
I'd like to speak to whoever's in charge. I'm here on behalf-

Something CRACKS at his feet and bounces to the far side of the road. A moment later, the negotiator raises the megaphone and CLICKS the trigger.

SHINER (CONT'D)
(amplified)
I am here-

A blurry object SMACKS into the bullhorn. Shiner's lips burst, and the megaphone CLATTERS on the ground, where it SKIRLS. A third dropped cellphone CRACKS against the pavement, followed by another, which SHATTERS.

Bleeding from his busted lips, Shiner spits out a chipped tooth and looks up. Thousands of black dots fill the sky.

SHINER (CONT'D)
Fuck.

Captain Ross SLAMS a helmet onto the negotiator's head and pulls him east. Cellphones fall toward the cordoned-off pavement at a speed of over two hundred miles an hour.

Civilians surge away from the barricades while Police Officers and SWAT team members duck underneath overhangs.

Plastic SHATTERS on the empty avenue. Hundreds of phones turn into ten times as many flying shards. People shield their faces.

Five feet from Franco's Hot Dogs, a cellphone SNAPS the negotiator's shin. YELLING, he spills to the asphalt.

A hailstorm of plastic RATTLES as Captain Ross pulls the wounded man into the relative safety of the eatery.

Shining in red upon the base of the Empire State Building is the declaration, 'We Will Not Negotiate.'

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM B / INTELLIGENCE OFFICE AT NYPD - LATER

SNORTING derisively, Westermark looks away from the television and back to his computer, which shows a blurry scan of a 301 Incorporation Form.

WESTERMARK
I got something.

Porter looks over, as do Adib and the Korean-American agent.

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
There's a construction company that stands out. David Enterprises.
(he looks at the screen)
Was incorporated about three months ago and started working on the second floor of the ESB soon after. They have an office I could-

PORTER
No. Stay here and keep digging.

Westermark glances at his watch. The time is 4:46. Frustrated, he returns his attention to his laptop.

ADIB
The group's called 'David'?
(he thinks)
Is the Empire State Building supposed to be 'Goliath?'

PORTER
Don't get poetic. Or biblical.

EXT. 5TH AVENUE BETWEEN 33RD AND 34TH STREET - 4:59 PM

The autumn sun sinks. A clock showing the time 4:59 appears on the base of the Empire State Building, and a dreadful apprehension spreads throughout the crowd. Using high-powered binoculars, Captain Ross and his SWAT team survey the captured landmark.

Something CRACKS, disrupting the quietude.

Everyone looks up. Against the purplish-gray sky, something glimmers, burgeoning like a translucent firework. Civilians back away from the barricades, encouraged by Officers Gonzalez and Karyn.

Soon, Captain Ross and his team locate the source of the glittering emanation. The rugose leader silently mouths the word, 'No,' aware that everything is about to change.

INT. LAW OFFICE / 64TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Standing before a broken window in a law office on the sixty-fourth floor of the Empire State Building is the handcuffed and battered early-riser, Mr. Wallman. A rope is wrapped around his neck and ankles.

As he opens his mouth to speak, a hooded Soldier shoves him through the opening.

EXT. EASTERN FACE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Mr. Wallman falls into the sky.

More than six hundred feet below him lies the off-white base of the Empire State Building, framed by thin gray lines that are Fifth Avenue and Thirty-fourth Street.

Trailing the rope that is wrapped around his neck and ankles, the seventy-three-year-old-man plummets. Office interiors flicker past him like a massive zoetrope where each frame is a diorama.

A dim ROAR rises to his wiggling, windblown ears-- a strange sound that he does not recognize. Far below, he sees tiny grains of salt that are the upturned faces of the many people who will witness his demise.

Mr. Wallman looks at the building.

MR. WALLMAN
I hope you do better than me, old girl.

Nodding, the aged fellow looks down.

The city rises. Rushing wind pulls moisture from his eyes, and he fights to them keep open. The ROAR grows louder and louder and soon he realizes that it is the sound of thousands of people SCREAMING.

The noose around Mr. Wallman's neck SNAPS taut.

His head is severed from his body.

SCREAMS crescendo, and the line around his ankles SNAPS taut.

EXT. 5TH AVENUE BETWEEN 33RD AND 34TH STREET - SAME

People look away as the inverted body jerks to a halt and SLAMS against the side of the building, fifteen stories above the ground. A second later, the severed head SMACKS against the roof.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM B / INTELLIGENCE OFFICE AT NYPD - SAME

The CIA team stares at the television, stunned and horrified, except for Westermark, who rises from his chair and strides toward the door. Hearing FOOTFALLS, Porter turns around.

PORTER
Westermark. Wait.

WESTERMARK
I can't just sit here and watch.
You want to fire me-- go ahead.

He walks through the door.

EXT. WALL STREET - DUSK

The dim violescent sky glowers above Wall Street, where stunned PEDESTRIANS are dwarfed by huge pale buildings. Westermark emerges from a revolving door, sees that traffic is stuck and proceeds toward the nearest subway. Somewhere, somebody SCREAMS.

A locked metal gate, three yellow ribbons and a sign that reads 'Closed' block the transit entrance. Cursing silently, the agent runs north.

EXT. 32ND STREET BETWEEN 5TH AND BROADWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The Liaison for the chief of police hastens past closed Korean and Korean-owned restaurants and nods his head at Captain Ross, who then cues two of his SWAT Officers. Using steel lifting keys, the men pry a manhole cover from the asphalt and drag it aside. Steam rises from the opening.

Captain Ross stabs an index finger at four Officers: FRECKLES, whose long face is an explosion of melanin, HANDSOME, whose name is ironic, SEONG, an Asian fellow who chews on an energy bar, and ISABELLA, the sharp-eyed scout. The team looks a question at their leader, and he TAPS his chest, selecting himself as the fifth member of the element.

INT. 32ND STREET ENTRANCE CHUTE - SAME

Infrared goggles over her eyes, Isabella pokes her head through the opening and appraises the cylindrical chute, which leads down into darkness. A moment later, she attaches herself to an iron ladder and begins her descent, followed by Freckles, Handsome, Captain Ross and Seong (who is quietly chewing the remainder of his energy bar).

The quintet climbs down. Despite their armor and weapons, the sound of their passage is a quiet SHUFFLE.

Isabella sees the bottom of the chute and TAPS Freckles's left boot. The man halts and TAPS Handsome, who then halts and TAPS Captain Ross, who then halts and TAPS Seong.

The woman sinks a tethered camera that looks like a black thimble through the nether opening. Once it settles, she presses a button, and a hazy infrared image shines upon a small viewer that is attached to her sleeve.

With her fingertips, she twists the line clockwise. The pixellated image pans right to left, revealing a sheer orange triangle and two dark red dots. Satisfied, the woman pulls the line.

INT. LONG SUBTERRANEAN CORRID0R - SAME

The tiny camera flies up into the chute. A moment later, Isabella enters the long stone corridor, touches her boots to the ground and points her assault rifle north, directly at a triangular plume of steam that is illuminated by two light bulbs. Freckles lands behind her and TAPS her shoulder.

Gun leveled, Isabella races forward. For a moment that is very short but feels very long, the woman is blinded by the HISSING steam.

Darkness replaces light as she reaches the far side, where she flips down her goggles. Ahead of her, the corridor is dark and empty.

Isabella motions to Freckles, and the fair-skinned fellow signals into the chute. Soon, Handsome, Captain Ross and Seong enter the tunnel.

Presently, the entire element proceeds north-- toward the basement of the Empire State Building.

INT. LIVING ROOM / WESTERMARK'S APARTMENT - SAME

Covered with sweat and breathing hard, Westermark SLAMS his front door, discards his backpack and hastens through the living room.

INT. KITCHEN / WESTERMARK'S APARTMENT - SAME

The agent CLICKS a switch. An overhead bulb brightens a kitchen that contains crackers, grains and other things a prisoner might eat. Kneeling, he slides a radiator aside and detaches a wall panel, revealing a safe into which he enters a ten digit combination. A thick bolt CLACKS, and the door springs open. Lying within the flame-proof enclosure is a heavy black duffel bag.

Westermark seizes the packed gear, walks over to his refrigerator and opens the door. From a recessed nook he withdraws a black thermos that has a glowing green light and a display that reads, '38 degrees.'

After depositing the vessel into his duffel bag, the agent glances at his watch. The time is 5:24.

INT. LAW OFFICE / 64TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Two hooded Soldiers tie a rope around the stomach of the goateed Observatory Guard, who stands before the broken window through which Mr. Wallman was pushed to his death.

EXT. 5TH AVENUE BETWEEN 33RD AND 34TH STREET - SAME

The evacuation zone has been expanded: No civilians are visible near the Empire State Building, except for the headless and inverted man who dangles from a rope nearly two hundred feet above the ground. Behind the metal barricades, POLICE OFFICERS, FIREFIGHTERS, MARINES and select REPORTERS monitor the situation.

INT. FRANCO'S HOT DOGS - SAME

A door in the rear of Franco's Hot Dog shop opens, admitting the remainder of Captain Ross's SWAT team. Quiet and efficient, the officers take positions throughout the dark establishment, setting up long-range rifles, shotgun microphones and communications banks.

INT. SUBTERRANEAN STAIRWELL - SAME

The door to the subterranean stairwell swings open. Assault rifle forward, Isabella leads the SWAT team down the steps, farther below the city.

As soon as she reaches the bottom, she raises a hand, prostrates herself, lowers her helmet and puts a bulletproof mirror around the corner.

Scanning, the scout sees a short narrow passage that is lighted by two red bulbs. It appears to be uninhabited.

INT. NARROW REPAIR TUNNEL - SAME

Pointing her assault rifle forward, Isabella strides across corrugated steel. As she nears the end of the tunnel, she sees a door with a sign that reads, 'Warning! Empire State Building Staff Only! Trespassers Will Be Prosecuted!!!'

Three yards from the exclamation points, the scout lies on her stomach and aims her machine gun. Freckles sidesteps her, reaches the door, slots a key and twists his hand.

The bolt CLACKS, echoing.

Silence returns, and the pair exchange nods. Freckles flattens himself against the wall, twists the handle and pushes the door forward.

Hinges CREAK. Cobwebs stretch like red tendons. Beyond the door lies a thick darkness that radiates heat.

Perspiring, Isabella lowers her infrared goggles. After a momentary inspection of the unlighted space (the major part of which glows red in her goggles), she raises her viewing aid, stands up and proceeds inside.

INT. BOILER ROOM 4 / BASEMENT / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The scout proceeds across an oppressively hot room that contains eighteen huge boilers, any one of which could hide an enemy. Soon, she reaches the door on the far side, which she cracks open. After a brief appraisal of the adjacent space, she signals Freckles.

INT. SUBTERRANEAN STAIRWELL / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Isabella emerges from the portal and ascends worn stone steps that are illuminated by an amber safety light. Presently, she reaches the street-level landing and a metal-reinforced door that is marked, 'Emergency Stairwell.'

As she prostrates herself, Freckles arrives, holding a key.

Silence spreads, and the two team members exchange a nod.

Gently, the fair-skinned fellow inserts the key and twists it. The bolt CLICKS, a quiet insect noise. Then, he turns the brass knob and pulls.

INT. EMERGENCY EXIT STAIRWELL / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Wires that connect the door to an explosive device grow taut.

Monitoring the ground-level portal from the second floor landing are three hooded SENTRIES who sit behind a low cinder block wall with a mounted M240 machine gun.

INT. SUBTERRANEAN STAIRWELL / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Freckles withdraws his hand from the door, which is ajar, and slides a small infrared camera through the opening. Looking at his monitor, he sees cool darkness, a light bulb, more cool darkness and three crimson lumps. A line rises from one of the lumps and vacillates left and right.

Somebody is waving at him.

Freckles's stomach twists. As he turns to warn Isabella, a GUNSHOT echoes. The door swings open, disconnecting the bomb's trigger wires, SNAP, SNAP.

BOOMING white fire burns the skin and boils the eyes of the both Officers. At the bottom of the steps, the remaining SWAT team members SLAM into the wall.

CAPTAIN ROSS
Back, back!

INT. BOILER ROOM 4 / BASEMENT / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Rubbing his eyes with one hand and pointing his assault rifle with the other, Captain Ross leads Seong and Handsome into the dark boiler room. Machine guns CRACKLE, firing at them from the darkness, and the crenulate leader turns around and shoves his officers back up the stairs.

INT. EMERGENCY EXIT STAIRWELL / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The three men climb past the scorched corpses into the smoke-filled emergency stairwell. There, they aim their assault rifles at the door marked, 'Lobby,' and squeeze. White fire CRACKLES. The SWAT team passes through the blasted portal just as the hooded Sentries on the second floor landing aim their M240.

INT. LOBBY (33RD ST. ENTRANCE) / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

COUGHING and half-blind, Captain Ross, Seong and Handsome enter the lobby. The M240 flashes behind them, its reports THUNDERING like an industrial press. Marble CRACKS, and the Asian man SHOUTS as his right leg is cut from his body.

Captain Ross grabs the wounded man by his collar and drags him toward the nearest revolving door. Handsome spins around, fires a CRACKLING burst into the stairwell and then hastens to his companions.

Too late, he notices the thick black wire above the door.

HANDSOME
Stop!

Captain Ross's left palm touches the brass crossbar. SIZZLING electricity surges into his body, broiling his insides and those of the man he holds.

An AK-47 machine gun CRACKLES in the stairwell, and Handsome escapes to the bank of elevators that go to floors 1-6, TAPPING every button that he passes.

Presently, he drops to the ground, points his rifle forward, dials on his two-way and CLICKS the talk bar.

HANDSOME (CONT'D)
Handsome here. Lobby doors have juice. M240 in the stairwell.

Across the way, his electrocuted boss falls to the ground, directly beside Seong.

HANDSOME (CONT'D)
Four down.

An elevator DINGS.

INT. ELEVATOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Handsome enters the lift, flattens himself against the wall and presses the button marked '6.' The door closes.

INT. ELEVATOR SHAFT (BANK 1-6) / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING

The elevator rises twenty-six feet, WHANGS into the array of iron poles and drops. Safety brakes SLAM into the walls.

INT. ELEVATOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Falling, Handsome SMACKS his face on the floor.

The door opens. Outside stand two hooded Soldiers, aiming AK-47 machine guns.

EXT. 5TH AVENUE BETWEEN 33RD AND 34TH STREET - SAME

Lights strobe inside the lobby of the Empire State Building, accompanied by a muted CRACKLING sound.

Police Officers, Firefighters, Marines, Reporters and the remainder of the SWAT team watch in silence.

A moment later, a clock face appears on the off-white base of the landmark, showing the time, '5:29.'

Officers Gonzalez and Karyn exchange uneasy glances. Nearby, the index finger of a BLONDE REPORTER points at the sixty-fourth floor.

A small speck that is a person falls through the air.

Some people watch, feeling that they should look away, and some people look away, feeling that they should watch.

EXT. EASTERN FACE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The bound Observatory Guard plummets at a speed of over one hundred and sixty miles an hour, trailing a rope that is cinched around his stomach and neck.

Stone and concrete rush toward him, and he shuts his eyes.

Suddenly, the rope SNAPS taut. The first loop RIPS through his torso, slicing him in half.

His pelvis and legs continue to fall, but his top half is jerked to a halt by the noose around his neck.

INT. LIVING ROOM / DANIELLE'S APARTMENT - SAME

Danielle, Mrs. Feinberg and three NEIGHBORS sit around the baby-blue living room, galvanized by the gruesome broadcast.

INT. COMMON ROOM / FIRE STATION - SAME

Tall Todd and six other FIREFIGHTERS occupy the common area, the place where the Westermark brothers shared cereal for their last meal. Silent and furious, the seven men watch events unfold upon a duct-taped television.

A phone RINGS, its noise overloud in the funereal quiet.

INT. TROPHY ROOM / FIRE STATION - SAME

Pressing the receiver to his right ear, Tall Todd enters the trophy room, where the kitschy souvenirs that once filled the display case have been replaced by helmets and boots that were recovered from Ground Zero.

TALL TODD
(into the phone)
Can you fucking believe this?

INT. WEATHERED BLACK PICKUP TRUCK - SAME

Listening with a wireless earpiece and dressed in black, Westermark gets into the driver's seat of his dented pickup truck, sets down his duffel bag and SLAMS the door.

WESTERMARK
(into the phone)
I'm going inside, and I need a favor.

He twists the ignition.

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
A loud red one.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM B / INTELLIGENCE OFFICE AT NYPD - LATER

CIA Agents drink coffee and type on their computers while Clerks race in and out of the room. Adib's phone BUZZES and he pulls it from his pocket. Surprised by the caller's identity, he withdraws from the conference room and presses the device to his ear.

INT. FRONT COUNTER FOR THE VAULT / NYPD - MOMENTS LATER

Closing his cellphone, Adib enters the receiving room, where a CHUBBY CLERK in an NYPD t-shirt stares at a television that shows the midtown incident.

ADIB
Jeremy.

The seated fellow rotates toward his visitor.

ADIB (CONT'D)
Peel yourself up and sit in the can for ten. Don't lock the vault.

EXT. 5TH AVENUE BETWEEN 33RD AND 34TH STREET - SAME

Officer Gonzalez watches Karyn point her police baton at unseen foes inside the Empire State Building.

KARYN
Come on out here you-

DISTORTED MALE VOICE ON PHONE
Moments ago, President Brownley sent a SWAT element into our building-

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM / 68TH FLOOR / ESB - SAME

Hawkins sits in a leather chair, his mouth six inches from a microphone that is connected to a scrambler and a series of laptop computers.

HAWKINS
-and we had no choice but to kill all five members. This violation of terms will result in the execution of not one, but two citizens every half hour until our demands are met.

Beside the pockmarked leader, Chatterjee and the one-armed technician Colorado monitor live television broadcasts from around the world.

EXT. FDR DRIVE - NIGHT

A taxi cab stops on the shoulder of a three-lane highway. Adib pays and emerges, lugging a very, very heavy, navy blue hard-shell suitcase. Once the vehicle pulls away, the Lebanese-American walks toward the glaring headlights of a black pickup truck, rolling his ponderous burden.

ADIB
What do you intend to do with one hundred and ten pounds of guns and knives?

Westermark grabs the handle of the suitcase and Adib seizes his wrist. Their eyes meet. The headlights of passing cars dig into their faces.

ADIB (CONT'D)
Are you working with somebody else? As far as I know, you only have two hands.
(he releases his peer)
Rhett. Tell me. I'll help if I can.

WESTERMARK
There's no sweep or extraction that works in this situation. Not one.

Westermark heaves the suitcase into his flatbed, where it WHANGS against the metal.

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
But we've got numbers. Even if a hundred bad guys are in there--which I doubt--we'd still outnumber them thirty-nine to one.

Adib is stunned.

ADIB
You’re going to arm the hostages?

Striding through bright headlights, the former firefighter nods his head.

ADIB (CONT'D)
How? That SWAT team didn’t even get past the lobby.

WESTERMARK
I plan as I go.

Westermark sits behind the wheel, SLAMS the door, waves at Adib and shifts gears.

INT. WEATHERED BLACK PICKUP TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Ruminating, the agent drives north. His cellphone BUZZES, and he sees that the caller is ‘Danielle N.’

Conflicted but decided, Westermark tightens his grip on the wheel and returns his attention to the road. Three blocks ahead of him shine stroboscopic red and yellow lights.

EXT. 33RD STREET AND PARK AVENUE - MOMENTS LATER

The evacuation area has been expanded to Park Avenue, where MARINES, POLICE OFFICERS and interlocked metal barricades create a line through which no civilian may pass.

An air horn BLASTS, lancing the quietude.

The sentries look east. Glaring white headlights, blinking yellow reflectors and flashing red sirens speed up the street. Marines and Police Officers unlock the barricades, making way for the fire engine named Marilyn.

Again, the air horn BLASTS.

INT. CABIN / FIRE ENGINE - SAME

A GOATEED FIREFIGHTER drives the apparatus toward the opening and waves his arm.

GOATEED FIREFIGHTER
Thanks brothers.

POLICE OFFICER
Be safe.

In the rear on the cabin, Tall Todd sits beside Westermark, who has his duffel bag slung over his left shoulder, knives and clips attached to his tactical vest and six silencer-equipped pistols in cut-out holsters along his waist, thighs and shins. Beside him on the bench sits the hard shell suitcase of weapons.

TALL TODD
I think you forgot your crossbow.

WESTERMARK
I didn't.

The firefighter grows uneasy.

TALL TODD
You're going to lose some hostages doing this. Maybe...maybe a lot of them.

WESTERMARK
There isn't a way to do this clean.

As the fire engine turns, the Empire State Building appears in the windshield. Westermark studies the besieged landmark.

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
The people in there deserve a chance to fight.

Tall Todd nods his head.

TALL TODD
I can't argue against that.
(he smirks)
I spell the word Firefighter with two capital Fs.

WESTERMARK
So do I.
(to the driver)
Get as close to the scaffold as you can and keep at an even twenty.

EXT. 33RD STREET OFF OF 5TH AVENUE - MOMENTS LATER

Thirty-third Street is empty, and all of its shop windows are dark. On the north side of the road stands the southern face of the Empire State Building-- the closed loading dock, two groups of (locked and electrified) revolving doors and three levels of scaffolding.

Currently, shadows grow, flung west by bright headlights. Proceeding in that direction, Marilyn hugs the north side of the road until she is less than a foot away from the curb.

INT. THE NEST (SECURITY BOOTH) / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Sitting at the central console inside The Nest, the traitorous security guard Branislav watches the fire engine progress across screens. Presently, it rolls into a shadowed area.

EXT. 33RD STREET OFF OF 5TH AVENUE - SAME

Westermark jumps from the back seat. As he falls, Tall Todd heaves the suitcase.

The agent lands on the sidewalk, rolls once and finds his footing. The lobbed suitcase SLAMS beside him and SKIDS across the concrete toward the second set of revolving doors.

Westermark extends his right hand.

INT. THE NEST (SECURITY BOOTH) / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Branislav looks at the monitor that shows the revolving door.

EXT. 33RD STREET OFF OF 5TH AVENUE - SAME

Westermark seizes the handle of the SKIDDING suitcase and stops it two inches before the entrance. A moment later, the fire engine reaches Broadway and turns south.

The agent withdraws a resilient black cord from his duffel bag, secures it to the handle of the one-hundred-and-ten-pound bag and ascends the scaffold.

EXT. 33RD STREET SCAFFOLD (SOUTH FACE OF THE ESB) - SAME

Creeping onto the first level, Westermark scans the area. The walkway is deserted, and above him, its ceiling adjoins the second floor of the Empire State Building.

Presently, he returns to the edge, pulls on his tether and raises the portable armory.

EXT. 5TH AVENUE BETWEEN 33RD AND 34TH STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Officer Gonzalez brings a cellphone to his ear as he and his partner Karyn walk along the east side of Fifth Avenue, the heels of their shoes CRACKING plastic shards as if they were hard candy.

GONZALEZ
No activity, bro. I'll text any news I get.
(he listens)
Good luck. And win this.

The officer pockets his cellphone and looks at the eastern face of the Empire State Building, where eight mutilated corpses now hang.

EXT. 33RD STREET SCAFFOLD (SOUTH FACE OF THE ESB) - SAME

On the scaffold, Westermark pockets his cellphone and climbs up to the second level. There, he grips the black cord with both hands and raises the suitcase.

Settled, the agent turns his attention to the nearest window. A glowing off-white curtain hangs behind the glass, concealing the interior.

Westermark places his gear against the building and withdraws a small tool from his vest. Applying its diamond tip to the window, he scores a vertical line, which soon becomes an 'L'. Two more scratches complete the eight-inch square.

Westermark sticks a piece of duct tape on the bottom line, withdraws a small blowtorch and CLICKS its igniter. A nearly-invisible flame flashes from the nozzle.

With the HISSING emission, the agent traces the square's vertical sides as well as its horizontal top. Fissures expand, CLICKING like quiet insects.

The off-white curtain undulates.

Westermark kills the flame and tosses the blowtorch onto his duffel bag.

A shadow covers the fabric.

The agent RIPS off the piece of duct tape, draws pistols and flattens himself against the surface of the building.

Fingers curl around the curtain and pull it aside, revealing the face of the Bearded Driver. With narrow eyes and a raised AK-47, he looks through the window.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Anything?

Westermark watches the man's shadow. The lump on top of its shoulders widens and narrows as the man shakes his head.

BEARDED DRIVER
Nothing.

The shadow sinks and the curtain slides back into place. FOOTFALLS resound beyond the glass.

BEARDED DRIVER (CONT'D)
Shuffle cards again.

The agent reapplies the duct tape, reignites the blowtorch and heats the square's top and sides.

Glass CLINKS and CLICKS. Soon, he kills the flame and presses his palm to the window. Imperfect edges CRACKLE, and the glass square swings forward, held in place by its duct-tape hinge.

Westermark reaches inside, twists the latch and withdraws his hand. Quietly, he raises the window.

Somebody SNEEZES, and the agent pauses.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Cover your mouth.

With the tip of a gun, Westermark draws the off-white curtain aside. Sitting at a card table that is thirty feet away are the Bearded Driver and three terrorists who are dressed like Construction Workers. All of them have AK-47s on the backs of their chairs.

Glancing in the other direction, the agent sees the skewered elevator shafts and a distant sign for an emergency exit.

Westermark returns his attention to the card players, points a silencer-fitted pistol at the face of the Bearded Driver and aims a second gun at the back of the dealer's head.

Targets sighted, Westermark squeezes. Muzzles flash.

The right eye of the Bearded Driver turns black, and the dealer's forehead splatters a pair of threes.

As Westermark repositions his pistols, a gust of wind blows the off-white curtain in-between him and his targets, both of whom are reaching for their machine guns.

INT. 2ND FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The seated men raise their AK-47s. Quiet muzzles flash on the far side of the billowing sheet, scorching it black.

Gore bursts from the heads of the armed duo. Nearby, the dealer and driver THUD upon the ground, spilling blood, kings and queens.

Westermark whips the sheet aside and launches himself into the building.

The second pair of dead men THUD upon the ground, and one of them squeezes his trigger, posthumously. A lone BANG resounds throughout the dusty interior.

KWOK (O.S.)
Vasil?

The agent glances toward the unseen speaker, who is somewhere amongst the skewered elevators.

KWOK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
James?

As Westermark turns his attention to the hanging light bulbs, his unseen foe slots a fresh bullet, CLICK-CLACK.

The agent fires his gun at the ceiling. Sparks flash on the supply line, and bulbs flicker, turn yellow and die. Darkness spills throughout the second floor.

Westermark turns one of the steel palettes onto its side and gets behind it.

On the west side of the enclosure, FOOTFALLS resound.

KWOK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Show yourself.

Westermark plucks a stun grenade from his vest, grips the spoon and pulls the ring.

KWOK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Show yourself right now or I will have five people thrown to their deaths.

The agent does not respond.

A moment later, a walkie-talkie CRACKLES.

KWOK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
There is a situation on F2. Take five captives down to sixty-four.

MAN ON WALKIE (O.S.)
Copy.

KWOK (O.S.)
If you don’t hear from me in thirty seconds, push them over.

MAN ON WALKIE (O.S.)
Will do. Over.

The device CRACKLES.

KWOK (O.S.)
Show yourself right now or-

WESTERMARK
Don’t hurt them, okay? I’m right here. I’ll put my gun down.

Westermark releases the stun grenade, and it CLANKS against the concrete on the far side of the palette.

KWOK (O.S.)
Where are you?

WESTERMARK
Here. Right here.

A blaze of light BURSTS, blinding Kwok, who stands near an elevator shaft.

Shaded by the palette, Westermark aims his pistol and fires.

A bullet burrows into Kwok's forehead, and for a brief moment, light follows. As the radiance fades, blood fills the hole, and the Korean-American falls.

The agent holsters his guns and runs across the room.

A moment after Kwok's head SMACKS the concrete, Westermark pulls the walkie-talkie from his hand and presses the talk bar. Static CRACKLES and SQUEAKS, echoing.

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
Situation contained. Return the captives to holding.

No reply emerges from the device.

Again, he presses the talk bar, eliciting STATIC.

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
The situation is contained. Do you copy?

He lifts his thumb.

MAN ON WALKIE (O.S.)
Who is this?

WESTERMARK
Say again?

The agent withdraws a wallet from the dead man's pants and looks at the fellow's driver's license.

MAN ON WALKIE (O.S.)
Who is this?

WESTERMARK
Jeff Kwok. Copy?

Listening for a response, Westermark returns to the open window, where he gathers his duffel bag and the one-hundred-and-ten-pound suitcase. Once again, he presses the talk bar.

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
Do you copy?

No response emerges from the walkie-talkie.

The agent's apprehensions grow as he rolls the portable armory toward the skewered elevator banks. After ten strides, a dim and distant noise garners his attention. Pausing, he looks over his shoulder.

Through the open window come the sounds of people SHOUTING and SCREAMING.

EXT. EASTERN FACE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Five handcuffed Captives plummet down the eastern face of the Empire State Building. Three of them YELL up at the Soldiers who pushed them, while the fourth and fifth person pray. No ropes are tied to any of these victims.

INT. 2ND FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

A person THUDS against the roof of the base. That terrible sound is followed by four more THUDS and the THUMPS of their subsequent bounces.

Suppressing his doubts and anger, Westermark continues across the unlighted second floor, focused on his mission.

WESTERMARK
(quietly)
I'll do what I can to give it meaning.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM B / INTELLIGENCE OFFICE AT NYPD - SAME

Computer keys RATTLE. Adib drags on a cigarette as he and his fellow Agents sift information. Scratching his nape, Porter circles the conference room like a shark in need of teeth and a meal.

PORTER
May. Let me hear your list of suspects.

The Korean-American Agent looks up from her monitor.

KOREAN-AMERICAN AGENT
It's more than four hundred people.

PORTER
So whittle. How many of those are Americans who have something against Brownley?

Leaning forward, the woman scans her screen.

KOREAN-AMERICAN AGENT
About...one hundred and twenty.

Porter approaches the Asian Agent.

PORTER
Of those, how many have been involved with a prank that's as expensive as this one?

KOREAN-AMERICAN AGENT
I don't think any of them have.

An idea comes to the Arabic Agent.

ADIB
What was the name of that guy who ran the president's election campaign? Raised funds, oversaw everything and got fired a week after Brownley was sworn in.

PORTER
Along with about ten others.

ADIB
Yeah, but this is the guy who got him elected. The man responsible for putting Brownley in the White House.

For a moment, Porter and every other Agent in the conference room is silent.

PORTER
Gregory something.

ADIB
Something with an H.

Computer keys RATTLE, and soon, May gleans the information.

KOREAN-AMERICAN AGENT
It's Gregory Hawkins.

PORTER
What's he been doing since?

KOREAN-AMERICAN AGENT
Mourning.
(she looks up)
He lost both of his sons in the war.

Adib and Porter exchange a serious glance, and the leader addresses the room.

PORTER
Okay everyone, time to focus. Hawkins is on the tip of the tit. Locate him. If we can't, push into his family.

INT. 2ND FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Westermark arrives at the elevator bank that services levels 1-6, which is the only group that has doors on this floor. All of the shafts are skewered by iron poles with bent ends.

The agent withdraws a crowbar from his duffel bag, and static HISSES on his walkie-talkie.

FOOTFALLS hasten in his direction.

Westermark throws the HISSING two-way into the darkness outside the elevator bank. GUNSHOTS flash. A bullet lances the device and CRACKS it in two.

The agent stabs the tip of the crowbar into the doorjamb, draws pistols and presses his back to the elevator.

FOOTFALLS vanish. Silence expands throughout the enclosure.

Westermark SLAMS his shoulder into the crowbar. The door slides two inches, and the tool sinks deeper. Against this lever, he presses his full weight. The opening grows, and yellow light spills into the hall.

The agent wedges the crowbar into the gap, seizes the suitcase and heaves it into the elevator shaft.

Something cylindrical rolls across the concrete.

INT. ELEVATOR SHAFT (BANK 1-6) / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The suitcase CLANKS upon two iron poles, and Westermark jumps inside. Behind him, a grenade EXPLODES.

The agent grabs a skewer, catching himself. Flying shards SMACK his tactical vest and cut his hands. A WHISTLING fragment splits his left ear. Shrapnel CRACKS against the brick wall and falls toward the elevator roof twenty-six feet below. Dust billows.

Panning his gun, Westermark sends three shots into the haze. Somebody SHOUTS. Hand over hand, the agent climbs away from the opening, toward the south side of the shaft.

Shadows twist, and a machine gun RATTLES. Bullets CRACK into the east wall.

ARABIC SOLDIER (O.S.)
Hold.

Silence returns. Westermark climbs up to the third floor, braces himself and looks down at the second level. Dust and smoke swirl in front of the half-open elevator door.

The barrel of a machine gun slides into the elevator shaft and draws a CRACKLING arc of white fire. Bricks CRACK, and sparks leap off of iron poles.

A bullet strikes the suitcase, knocking it loose.

Westermark’s stomach sinks.

The portable armory falls, passes through a pool of yellow light and disappears.

INT. 2ND FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

A loud THUD echoes deep within the elevator shaft. On either side of the half-open door stand two hooded SOLDIERS, a large fellow and his Arabic peer.

LARGE SOLDIER
Sounds like we got him.

ARABIC SOLIDER
I'll go down and check. You stay here.

INT. ELEVATOR SHAFT (BANK 1-6) / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

As FOOTFALLS resound, Westermark walks along a third-floor ledge until he stands directly above the half-open door. There, the agent appraises the six ropes in the middle of the elevator shaft, each of which is made of more than six hundred individual steel wires.

Presently, he withdraws gloves.

INT. 2ND FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The Large Soldier monitors the half-open elevator. Dust settles, and he SNEEZES.

A shadow speeds down the shaft, accompanied by a vertical succession of muzzle flashes. Bullets pierce the terrorist's neck, SMACK his vest and CRACK his right kneecap.

The man SLAMS into the wall and raises his AK-47.

INT. ELEVATOR SHAFT (BANK 1-6) / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Upsidedown on an elevator rope, Westermark slides below the opening. A machine gun CRACKLES, and bullets WHISTLE past the soles of his boots. Presently, the barrage ends.

INT. 2ND FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The wounded Soldier crawls toward the elevator shaft, trailing his AK-47 by its strap, blood draining from his neck and riven knee. COUGHING, he nears the opening.

A gun stretches the darkness and flashes.

INT. ELEVATOR SHAFT (BANK 1-6) / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Westermark holsters his smoking pistol and slides down the rope as if it were a fire pole.

INT. EMERGENCY EXIT STAIRWELL / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The Arabic Soldier crosses the second floor landing where the three Sentries who ambushed the SWAT team are stationed with their mounted M240 behind a low wall of cinder blocks.

INT. ELEVATOR SHAFT (BANK 1-6) / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The agent's boots touch the elevator roof, directly beside the fallen suitcase. Presently, he looks at the north wall of the shaft, where he sees a metal hatchway.

INT. LOBBY (33RD ST. ENTRANCE) / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The Arabic Soldier walks past the sticky stains of the SWAT team and proceeds along the lobby. After fifteen strides, he leaps a turnstile and reaches the elevator bank that services floors 1-6. There, he walks to the first door, aims his weapon and presses the call button.

The summoned lift opens, and the Arabic Soldier squeezes his trigger. The CRACKLING muzzle spits lightning. Bullets lance the walls and ceiling, and all around the man's feet, spent shells CLINK, bouncing.

A second elevator opens, unbeknownst to the terrorist who does not see anything but the ROARING destruction engendered by his machine gun.

Concealed behind the doorjamb, Westermark levels his pistol. Bullets tear into the Arabic Soldier's neck, and he turns to face his attacker.

INT. EMERGENCY EXIT STAIRWELL / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Gunfire CRACKLES. The three Sentries on the second floor landing look toward the lobby door. A walkie-talkie HISSES.

VOICE OF STROMFORD (O.S.)
Status?

One of the terrorists exhales a plume of cigarette smoke and thumbs his two-way.

SENTRY WHO SMOKES
Checking.

FOOTFALLS resound in the lobby, and the hooded Soldier SLAMS through the door, GASPING and holding his bloody neck.

SENTRY WHO SMOKES (CONT'D)
Asad?

The wounded man SLAMS into the wall, and the Sentries aim their mounted M240 at the doorway.

Disguised, Westermark draws, aims and fires. Two Sentries fly backward, their faces imploding in a welter of eyeballs, teeth and blood.

The third terrorist ducks below the cinder blocks, and the agent steps behind the doorjamb. Lying on the steps between the two men is a lighted cigarette from which rises a single line of smoke.

WESTERMARK
Hands up.

The words resonate, but receive no response.

Aiming his pistol at the M240, the agent squeezes. The shot cuts the line of cigarette smoke and CLANKS against the barrel of the mounted machine gun, turning it so that the bullet belt is exposed.

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
Hands up or I'll kill you.

There is no response.

A walkie-talkie CRACKLES, and the hidden Sentry WHISPERS.

Westermark fires. The cartridges along the bullet belt erupt, CRACKLING like fireworks, spitting gun powder and hot metal onto the Sentry, who YELLS, pained.

Hammers CLINK on spent shells. The agent drops his guns and draws two more.

Seared and bloody, the Sentry rises, brandishing his AK-47. Two bullets impact his bulletproof vest and knock him back.

Westermark races up the steps.

The terrorist SLAMS against the wall and witnesses his assailant kick the AK-47 from his hands, throw him to the ground and step on his neck.

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
How many are you?

Pinned, the Sentry shakes his head. Westermark removes his hood, seizes a cinder block and holds it over the man's head.

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
Give me a number.

Again, the fellow shakes his head. The agent opens his hand. The cinder block scrapes hair and skin from the Sentry's scalp and POUNDS the floor.

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
How many?

Blood spills from wound. The agent seizes another cinder block and holds it over the Sentry's face.

SENTRY WHO SMOKES
No!

WESTERMARK
How many?

SENTRY WHO SMOKES
Eighty.

WESTERMARK
If you're lying, I'll kill you slow.

SENTRY WHO SMOKES
I'm not, I swear.

WESTERMARK
Don't swear.

The stone SMASHES his jaw.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM / 68TH FLOOR / ESB - SAME

The leathery Colonel from Texas named Stromford walks into the conference room, where Hawkins, Chatterjee and the one-armed technician Colorado monitor news events on computers.

STROMFORD
There's a situation on F1 and F2. I took some men off of sixty-six and sent them down.

Unconcerned, the pockmarked leader nods.

HAWKINS
Once you've apprehended the intruders, I will make an announcement and double the number of executions.

STROMFORD
That should provoke a response.

HAWKINS
We shall see.

INT. 2ND FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Wearing two purloined AK-47s on his right shoulder, Westermark walks across the second floor and reaches a skewered elevator bank that has no doors. There, he aims a machine gun and pulls the trigger.

Lightning CRACKLES. Bullets dig into the brick, sending reddish-brown shards pell-mell. Grit SIZZLES and chips fly. Gradually, the thick wall erodes. A hammer CLICKS. The agent discards the empty weapon and grips its sibling.

White fire flashes, CRACKLING, and large pieces of the elevator bank CRUMBLE. One by one, five iron poles CLANK against the floor, dislodged.

INT. EMERGENCY EXIT STAIRWELL / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Eight hooded Soldiers hasten down the emergency stairwell and cross the fortieth floor landing.

INT. LOBBY (5TH AVENUE ENTRANCE) / ESB - MOMENTS LATER

Westermark withdraws the suitcase of weapons from an elevator in bank 1-6 and rolls it across the lobby, toward the group that services floors 41-55. There, he slings his duffel bag, picks up an extra tactical vest, presses a call button, pulls down his checkered hood and raises his pistol.

The door opens, and he fires. A welter of shards replaces the interior security camera.

Rolling the one-hundred-and-ten-pound suitcase, Westermark enters the elevator. With his silencer, he CLICKS the number, ‘55.’

INT. ELEVATOR - SAME

As the elevator ascends, the agent fits the spare bulletproof vest over the portable armory as if it were a bib.

INT. MAIN HALL / 28TH FLOOR / ESB - MOMENTS LATER

The main hall of the twenty-fourth floor is deserted. On one end, unseen Soldiers THUNDER down steps, past the closed emergency exit door, and on the other end, the freed elevator ascends, bearing the agent.

INT. THE NEST (SECURITY BOOTH) / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Befuddled, the traitorous security guard Branislav blows dust from the shielded three-pronged tip of an XLR cable and reattaches it to an ancient monitor.

No image appears on the screen. Presently, the man raises a walkie-talkie to his mouth and thumbs the talk bar.

BRANISLAV
An elevator camera is out.

VOICE OF STROMFORD (O.S.)
Floors?

BRANISLAV
Forty-one to fifty-five.

INT. MEETING ROOM / 64TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Lowering his two-way radio, Stromford nods at Mikhail (the cat killer with the collapsed nose), who sits beside BILLY and TREVOR, two blonde men whose strong resemblance marks them as brothers.

STROMFORD
Get into the well.

MIKHAIL
(Eastern European Accent)
May I bring some cats?

STROMFORD
You may.

EXT. MAIN HALL / 55TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Brown carpets and white marble walls with brass inlay distinguish the main hall of the fifty-fifth floor. Near the west end of the long passageway, one of the eight steel doors slides open, revealing an empty elevator. A moment later, Westermark drains from a hatch in its ceiling, upsidedown, pointing his gun.

Satisfied that he is alone, the agent drops to the floor, seizes his gear and enters the hall. Behind him, the steel door closes.

Westermark slings the duffel bag on his left shoulder and proceeds west, rolling the navy suitcase. The sign ahead of him reads, ‘Emergency Exit / Stairwell.’

As he walks, he presses a cellphone to his ear.

WESTERMARK
Adib. I need three favors.

INT. CENTRAL AREA / 65TH FLOOR / ESB - SAME

Nathaniel, the Pregnant Woman and the petite twenty-seven-year-old named CINDY who was selected to be the helper are amongst the twelve hundred Captives who sit on the floor, silent, hungry and thirsty. Falling asleep, the expectant mother tips forward, flinches and YELPS.

One of the fifteen hooded Soldiers approaches the woman, who soon realizes that her unconscious exclamation might bring about her death. Nearby, an ANGRY BUSINESSMAN sees the situation and loses control.

ANGRY BUSINESSMAN
She's a pregnant woman for God's-

The terrorist KICKS the objector in the head, knocking him over. A moment later, the tip of an AK-47 presses against the side of the fellow's nose.

All around the central area, Soldiers climb onto desks and aim their weapons directly at the crowd. People turn away and lower their heads, except Nathaniel and the Pregnant Woman, who look directly at the Angry Businessman.

ANGRY BUSINESSMAN (CONT'D)
I was only trying-

HOODED SOLDIER
(Eastern European Accent)
Listen! Everybody listen!

A GUNSHOT flashes. The fellow's nose turns into a flower of burnt skin, red flesh and shattered cartilage. Disfigured, the Angry Businessman WAILS.

HOODED SOLDIER (CONT'D)
That's what a hero sounds like!

Nathaniel and the Pregnant Woman look away.

INT. EMERGENCY EXIT STAIRWELL / ESB - MOMENTS LATER

Wearing his duffel bag and carrying the bulletproofed suitcase, Westermark walks onto the sixty-first floor landing. There, he pauses and listens.

The stairwell is quiet. Presently, something TAPS his shoulder and CLANKS on the ground.

Westermark drops behind his suitcase, and the grenade EXPLODES. The bulletproof bag SLAMS into the agent, throwing him into the air. An amber light bulb on the far wall SHATTERS, crushed by his back.

The agent SLAMS on the landing between floors. A moment later, the one-hundred-and-ten-pound suitcase POUNDS his left shoulder, SNAPPING his collar bone. Suppressing a yell, his face turns scarlet.

FOOTFALLS resound on the stairwell above him.

The agent rises, moves his duffel bag to his good shoulder and seizes the suitcase with his right hand. Sweat drips down his face.

Overhead, the FOOTFALLS grow louder.

Carrying the portable armory, Westermark walks onto the stairwell, wavers and seizes the rail with his left hand. His broken clavicle CLICKS, and the pain doubles him over. It takes him two seconds to remember how to breathe.

Fighting the agony, the agent leans the suitcase against the steps, ties the cord around its handle and ascends, holding the tether. Ahead of him, the emergency door to floor sixty-one hangs open, warped by the blast.

As he crosses the landing, a grenade CLANKS against the wall.

Westermark dives into the passageway.

INT. MAIN PASSAGE / 61ST FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The agent SLAMS onto the hall carpet, and the grenade EXPLODES. Flying bits of metal pierce the wall, the floor, his boots and his legs.

Pained, Westermark crawls away from the door, trailing the black cord. Around the corner, a pistol BANGS, and the bullet SMACKS the agent’s vest, knocking him flat. Instantly, he rolls against a wall, draws a pistol and aims at the smoky veil that obscures the stairwell.

Again, an unseen weapon CRACKLES. Bullets SCRAPE furrows across the carpet, and Westermark squeezes his trigger. Sent lead CRACKS into walls and CLINKS upon metal.

Gradually, the foggy stairwell grows quiet.

The agent scans his immediate surroundings, sees the door for a company that is named, ‘W.S. Trading, Inc.’ and shoots.

INT. WAITING ROOM / W.S. TRADING, INC. / ESB - SAME

The door swings open, and an alarm RINGS. Bleeding from the three pieces of metal that are stuck in his legs, Westermark crawls into the mauve and beige waiting room. Inside, he leans against a thick wall, draws the cord taut and pulls. His clavicle CLICKS, and he suppresses a yell.

Straining, dripping sweat and red with agony, he tows the line. A dim SCUFFING sound issues from the stairwell.

INT. EMERGENCY EXIT STAIRWELL / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Drawn by the cord, the suitcase slowly slides up the steps.

A hooded Soldier creeps behind the load, aiming his AK-47 at the sixty-first landing. Suddenly, the man's walkie-talkie CHIRPS and CRACKLES. He CLICKS off the device, and bullets lance his neck and face.

INT. WAITING ROOM / W.S. TRADING, INC. / ESB - SAME

Westermark withdraws his smoking gun from the hall, CLICKS off his two-way and puts both hands on the cord.

INT. EMERGENCY EXIT STAIRWELL / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Trevor leaps down to the sixty-first floor and crouches beside the emergency exit. There, he exchanges a nod with Billy, who is prone on the landing above, aiming a machine gun that has an extended clip.

INT. WAITING ROOM / W.S. TRADING, INC. / ESB - SAME

RATTLING gunfire KNOCKS the office door wide. Bullets CRACK the front desk and turn an abstract paperweight into something even less recognizable. Two feet away from the portal, the agent grips the taut cord and waits for the CRACKLING barrage to end.

INT. MAIN PASSAGE / 61ST FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Trevor crawls underneath the WHISTLING stream of bullets. Only two yards lie between him and the open door of W.S. Trading, Inc.

INT. WAITING ROOM / W.S. TRADING, INC. / ESB - SAME

As the machine gun CRACKLES, Westermark wraps the cord around the leg of a sofa.

A hand holding a pistol snakes around the doorjamb, across the carpet.

Westermark STOMPS on the weapon as it BANGS. A shot garbage pail flies across the room, and the man in the hall tries to pull his hand from underneath the agent's boot.

Westermark fires two bullets into the man's elbow. Pulling on his arm, the terrorist tears flesh and CRACKS bones until the limb RIPS in half.

The freed stump disappears into the hall.

INT. MAIN PASSAGE / 61ST FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Asymmetrical and in agony, the blonde terrorist draws a gun with his remaining hand.

INT. WAITING ROOM / W.S. TRADING, INC. / ESB - SAME

A shadow fills the portal, and Westermark yanks the tether.

The suitcase SLAMS into Trevor's legs, knocking him over.

A boot lands on the prone man's nape, SNAPPING bones. Nearby, the heavy bag THUDS on the ground.

Gunfire CRACKLES in the hallway. Bullets WHISTLE past Westermark, who is outside the perimeter the portal. Soon, the barrage stops.

Unseen shells CLINK down steps and come to rest. Silence expands throughout the area.

Leaning against the wall, the agent reloads a pistol and pulls a spent clip from another. A dim noise garners his attention, and he turns his right ear forward to listen.

Something SHUFFLES within stairwell, as loud and arrhythmic as a drunken dancer. The sound stops, and a woman SHRIEKS.

Westermark's stomach twists.

MIKHAIL (O.S.)
Walk outside with your hands up or I will execute this woman.

The agent does not respond to his antagonist.

MIKHAIL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You have three seconds.

The words resound, but elicit no reply.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Please don't. I have two childre-

A gun BOOMS in the stairwell, followed by the THUDS and THUMPS of a lifeless body tumbling down stairs.

Westermark glances at the landing and sees the shot woman, prone upon the concrete, lying in a pool of blood. The agent's eyes shine, and an awful sickness fills his stomach.

Another woman SHRIEKS.

MIKHAIL (O.S.)
Walk outside with your hands up or I will execute another.

Gritting his teeth in frustration, the agent suppresses his desire to yield.

TERRIFIED WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Please! Do what he says or-

MIKHAIL (O.S.)
Three seconds.

The warning echoes, but elicits no reply. Fixed on his mission, he stares at the suitcase of guns, which might be the only hope for nearly four thousand captives.

A GUNSHOT resounds, followed by the THUDS and THUMPS of another body tumbling down the steps.

Sweat beads upon the agent's pale face.

Presently, another woman SHRIEKS.

INT. EMERGENCY EXIT STAIRWELL / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Standing on the platform between the sixty-first and sixty-second floors, Mikhail places the barrel of his revolver against the skull of a bound, forty-year-old BUSINESSWOMAN.

MIKHAIL
I will drop dead cats on your doorstep until you give yourself up.

The words resound. On the landing below, Billy creeps toward the doorway, his back flat against the wall.

MIKHAIL (CONT'D)
Three seconds.

INT. WAITING ROOM / W.S. TRADING, INC. / ESB - SAME

Unable to engage his enemy, Westermark shuts the door, seizes the suitcase and proceeds toward the inner office. A GUNSHOT resounds in the stairwell, followed by the THUDS and THUMPS of the third tumbling body. Fury and unshed tears shine in the agent's eyes.

The door flies open, kicked by Billy, who holds an AK-47. Westermark SLAMS into his adversary and drives him toward the wall. RATTLING, the machine gun draws a line of bullet holes across the ceiling.

Billy's back SLAMS into the wall, and he drops his weapon. Pinned, he pounds his elbows into the agent's shoulders. Westermark's broken clavicle CRACKLES, and he YELLS.

Gaining the advantage, Billy knees his foe in the groin and SMACKS an elbow across his chin.

Westermark CLAPS his right hand to his enemy's throat and squeezes. GASPING, the terrorist goes into shock.

FOOTFALLS echo in the stairwell.

Westermark RIPS Billy's windpipe from his neck as if it were a serpent. The man's exposed larynx BUZZES.

As the terrorist falls, the agent draws a gun and points it at the door.

Holding a bulletproof vest in front of his face and wearing another, Mikhail blindly rushes his enemy.

Westermark tilts his pistol and fires. The Breznian's right kneecap CRACKS, and he SLAMS into the agent. Together, they THUD upon the ground.

Mikhail straddles the agent and receives a fist across his jaw. Spitting blood, the Breznian draws a hunting knife.

The blade comes down, and Westermark shields himself with his left arm. Metal spears the intervening flesh. The men press into each other, and a triangle of skin extends from the agent's forearm, followed by the tip of the blade. Bearing down, Mikhail slides the knife through the limb and into his enemy's neck.

Westermark POUNDS his right fist against the Breznian's collapsed nose, which CRUMBLES, squirting red mucus. Mikhail GRUNTS and screws the buried blade.

Blood drains from the wounds, and the agent starts to loose consciousness. Desperate, he tilts his head forward and bites into his enemy's wrist as if it were an apple.

Mikhail pulls his arm free, tearing open skin, arteries and veins. Clutching the wound, he stumbles back.

Westermark pulls the knife from his left arm and plunges it into the man's foot. Pinned, Mikhail falls backward and SLAMS his head against the floor.

MIKHAIL
Don't kill-

The agent fires a revolver into the bottom of the man's chin. Brains and skull bits tumble across the carpet like a game of marbles.

Dazed and bleeding, Westermark withdraws a styptic pencil from his vest, flips off the cap and applies the antihemohorrhagic agent to the wounds on his neck and left arm. Soon, the bleeding slows.

EXT. ALLEYWAY BESIDE ST. JOSEPH'S CATHEDRAL - SAME

A taxi cab parks at the mouth of an alley that abuts St. Joseph's Cathedral-- an old church that has survived more than one hundred and twenty New York winters. After paying the driver, the CIA agent Adib steps outside and walks toward the trunk, which opens like the mouth of a yawning dog.

Gripping the handles of three long metal suitcases, the agent departs from the vehicle and proceeds up the passage, where his FOOTFALLS echo. Something SHUFFLES in a dark corner, and soon a HOMELESS MAN pokes his head out of a crate and eyes the stranger. The gaze is openly suspicious.

ADIB
Got a problem with an Arab going into a closed church at night with a bunch of metal suitcases?

HOMELESS MAN
Um...

Adib continues reaches the rear entrance.

ADIB
Racist.

INT. EMERGENCY EXIT STAIRWELL / ESB - MOMENTS LATER

The door to the sixty-first floor closes, and presently, five hooded SOLDIERS approach the landing upon which lie the bodies of the three executed women.

FOREMOST SOLDIER
Hold here until we get orders.

INT. MAIN PASSAGE / 61ST FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Bandages adorn Westermark's neck, left arm, hands and split ear, though he has not removed the shrapnel from his legs. Currently, he rests the spoon of an armed hand grenade against the stairwell door and walks east. His gait is as unsteady as that of an old man.

After several slow steps, he stumbles and leans against the wall. Sweat drips down his pale face, and the hallway undulates all around him.

Gradually, the liquid world stabilizes. The agent stands upright, seizes the handle of the suitcase and proceeds, rolling his heavy burden.

INT. PRESIDENT'S OFFICE / MILNER & GOLD / ESB - MOMENTS LATER

The lights of Fifth Avenue, eastern Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens shine past venetian blinds into an oak-panelled office that has a beige carpet, a coat rack, a large desk and a sofa that Westermark now pushes against a locked door.

Dizzy from his exertion, he staggers to a nearby garbage can and leans over. A painful paroxysm CLICKS his broken clavicle, and he expels a foul stew.

After wiping his mouth, the agent rights himself, arms a grenade, wedges it in-between the couch and the door, walks toward the windows and GRUNTS as he overturns the heavy desk. Paperweights, framed photographs, a rotary phone, a computer monitor and a coffee mug that says '#1 at being #1' collect upon the ground. Beside the heap, he places the coat rack.

Presently, Westermark reaches into his duffel bag and withdraws the black thermos that he earlier took from his refrigerator. Its display shows the Fahrenheit temperature, '41 degrees.'

The agent hangs the cylinder on the coat rack and sits behind the overturned desk, when a wave of nausea overwhelms him. His vision narrows, and his eyelids grow heavy.

Fighting the abyssal undertow, Westermark SLAPS his broken clavicle. Pain sears his left side.

Awake, the agent extracts a nozzle from the thermos and from that withdraws a butterfly needle that is attached to a long clear tube. With his pinky, he CLICKS the button beside the digital display. The temperature is replaced by the following information: 'Red Blood Cells 100% (300 ml) + White Blood Cells 100% (50 ml).'

Westermark CLICKS the 'Pump' button. The device WHIRS, and a red worm colors the line. With unsteady fingers, the agent jams the dripping needle into his left arm.

Sweat beads upon his face, and his vision narrows. In his final moment of consciousness, he draws a pistol from his shin holster.

Westermark blacks out.

His forehead KNOCKS against the wood, and his hand lands upon the desk, gripping the gun, pointing its barrel directly at the door.

EXT. BALCONY / DANIELLE'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Danielle looks at the dark trees of Central Park as she listens to an outgoing message.

DANIELLE (O.S.)
You didn't pick up the other time I called, so I'm going to leave a message and say what I'm thinking.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM / 68TH FLOOR / ESB - MOMENTS LATER

Hawkins, Chatterjee and Colorado watch the irked, one-eared Texan enter the room, scratching the lightning bolts on the side of his neck.

STROMFORD
We lost eleven.

HAWKINS
Is that including Kwok and his team?

STROMFORD
No.

CHATTERJEE
So they've killed sixteen of ours?

STROMFORD
That's the arithmetic, Gandhi.
(to Hawkins)
The enemy's pinned on F61. There's a fast way to do this and there's a safe way to do this.

Ruminating, the pockmarked leader rubs his chin.

HAWKINS
Do it the safe way. We can't afford more casualties.

STROMFORD
I'll handle it personally.

INT. DARK OFFICE / 68TH FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Hawkins walks into an unlighted office and peers through the window at the city streets far below. Frustrated, he SLAPS his hand against the pane, which shivers from the impact. A moment later, he calms himself, highlights a number on his cellphone and places the receiver to his ear.

HAWKINS
It's 1A.
(he listens)
We've lost some men, and I'm going to accelerate the larger timetable.
(he listens)
Correct. Please relay this to our financiers.
(MORE)

HAWKINS (CONT'D)
The President and the world are about to see how serious we truly are.

EXT. 5TH AVENUE BETWEEN 33RD AND 34TH STREET - LATER

Eighteen bodies decorate the eastern face of the Empire State Building like a hideous necklace. Currently, an enormous skull appears on the off-white base of the landmark, garnering the attentions of Firefighters, Marines, Police Officers, Reporters and Cameramen.

AMPLIFIED DISTORTED VOICE
President Brownley's inaction will not be tolerated. He must begin the evacuation of Breznia and turn himself over to us by eleven o'clock this evening or we will push one hundred hostages to their deaths.

A poisonous silence spreads throughout the assemblage.

Officer Gonzalez looks at his cellphone, which shows that the time is 9:37. Anxious, he selects the name 'Westermark,' and types 'mass execution at 11pm-- 100 hostages.'

GONZALEZ
If you're doing something, do it yesterday.

INT. PRESIDENT'S OFFICE / MILNER & GOLD / ESB - MOMENTS LATER

The transfusion pump WHIRS, sending cold red and white blood cells into the left arm of the unconscious agent. Currently, his cellphone BUZZES, falls from his belt and CLATTERS.

Awakened, Westermark fires a shot into the door. Nothing stirs, except for the smoke that rises from his gun barrel.

Presently, he checks the transfusion display, which states, 'Red Blood Cells 78% + White Blood Cells 78%.' Displeased by the statistic, the agent opens his phone, selects 'Listen' and sets the device beside his knee.

DANIELLE'S VOICE
You didn't pick up the other time I called, so I'm going to leave a message and say what I'm thinking.

The weakened agent leans his head against the desk and closes his eyes.

DANIELLE'S VOICE (CONT'D)
I'm on my balcony--where we ate dinner the other night--and I'm thinking about what's going on in the Empire State Building, wondering if you're there, worried that you are, but also hoping that you're doing something about the sick fucks who're doing this to us. And I want to say that you don't have to choose between your work and me. We're not in a competition. Part of why I'm-
(she hesitates)
Part of why I'm falling in love with you is your commitment to your work and what you do and why.
(she exhales)
Maybe I'm wrong, but I think the real reason you don't want us to get too serious is in case something bad happens to you.

Opening his eyes, Westermark looks at the phone. Beside his right shoulder, the counter drops from 74% to 73%.

DANIELLE'S VOICE (CONT'D)
And I want to say, I think that's a bullshit reason not to give us a chance. A cowardly reason. Bad things can happen to anybody. Your brother. My husband.
(she pauses)
I don't know if you'll call me back-maybe you're busy right now or maybe you're really done dealing with me--but please take care of yourself. And think about things. You can have whatever you allow yourself to have.

A small CLICK follows the message.

The agent ponders the woman's analysis while the WHIRRING machine pumps cold blood into his system.

EXT. BALCONY / DANIELLE'S APARTMENT - SAME

Danielle stands on the corner of her balcony, looking south. Amidst the many buildings lying before her is the tall dark obelisk that is the captured landmark.

INT. MAIN HALL / 62ND FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Stromford leads eight hooded SOLDIERS into the olive green hallway that bisects the sixty-second floor. There, they proceed to the elevators.

The foremost fellow stops and stabs the tip of a crowbar into a doorjamb. Behind him, two Soldiers remove their hoods and don dual-filter gas masks.

INT. PRESIDENT'S OFFICE / MILNER & GOLD, INC. / ESB - SAME

Westermark selects the 'Text' function on his cellular phone, contemplates a reply, shakes his head and pockets the device. The numbers on the transfusion pump drop to 67%.

INT. ELEVATOR SHAFT (BANK 55-67) / ESB - SAME

Buckled onto safety lines, the two Soldiers who wear gas masks grab elevator cables and climb down the shaft, hand over hand, gathering cobwebs on the soles of their boots. Once they reach the floor below, they pause, brace themselves and withdraw crowbars.

INT. MAIN PASSAGE / 61ST FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

An elevator door SQUEAKS ajar, and hands holding riot guns emerge from the opening. Barrels flash.

INT. PRESIDENT'S OFFICE / MILNER & GOLD, INC. / ESB - SAME

Westermark hears something CLANK against the office door, SMACK against the tile and HISS. Emerging from the bullet hole he earlier authored is a finger of ochre-colored smoke.

WESTERMARK
Garbage.

The agent plucks the needle from his arm and CLICKS off the pump, which BEEPS and flashes the number '65%.'

INT. MAIN HALL / 62ND FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

On the floor above the agent, six Soldiers wearing gas masks point their gun into open elevators shafts, ready to shoot anybody who tries to escape.

INT. EMERGENCY EXIT STAIRWELL / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Stromford stands on the landing between the sixty-first and sixty-second floor, accompanied by four hooded Soldiers who point AK-47s at the warped emergency exit door.

INT. MAIN PASSAGE / 61ST FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Ochre-colored gas HISSES from the valves of a dozen grenades.

INT. PRESIDENT'S OFFICE / MILNER & GOLD, INC. / ESB - SAME

As the jaundiced mist creeps into the room, Westermark raises the blinds, revealing Fifth Avenue and the hangman's rope that lies immediately outside the fixed window.

Presently, he withdraws his diamond-tipped glass-cutter, SCRAPES a giant 'X' into the pane and shoots the mark. The bullet CRACKS a small hole through the thick window.

Holding his breath, Westermark seizes the computer monitor, wraps its plug around his right wrist and heaves it at the 'X.' Glass SHATTERS.

EXT. 5TH AVENUE BETWEEN 33RD AND 34TH STREET - SAME

Gonzalez sees twinkling shards and a small white cube fall from the sixty-first floor. A moment, the rectilinear object disappears.

INT. PRESIDENT'S OFFICE / MILNER & GOLD, INC. / ESB - SAME

Westermark yanks the monitor into the office by its tail and SLAMS it on the floor.

Ochre fog obscures the western half of the room, and the agent's eyes start to water. Quickly, he injects a local anaesthetic in his left shoulder, discards the syringe, slings his duffel bag, secrets the thermos and grabs the handle of the heavy suitcase.

As the burdened man hastens toward the window, he snatches the coffee mug that says, '#1 at being #1,' and clips it by its handle to his vest.

Wind WHISTLING in his face, Westermark sets the suitcase upon the sill, reaches through the jagged aperture and seizes the hangman's rope.

EXT. 5TH AVENUE BETWEEN 33RD AND 34TH STREET - SAME

Hundreds of feet below, Gonzalez sees Mr. Wallman's inverted and headless body waver.

EXT. EASTERN FACE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Gripping the line with both hands, the agent steps off of the building and swings into the air. Shards of glass fall from the sill, shrink and vanish.

Trailing the black cord, Westermark scissors his legs and climbs, hand over hand, his anaesthetized shoulder CLICKING like a timepiece. Blood darkens the bandage on his left arm.

Suddenly, the wind ROARS. The city tilts, and the agent swings south. Presently, he SLAMS his boots to the facade and ends his detour. Jostled, the duffel bag slips from his shoulder, jerks an arm loose and falls into the sky.

WESTERMARK
Garbage.

Assailed by HOWLING winds, Westermark replaces his grip on the rope and looks at the brilliant white building that is under construction near the southern end of Manhattan--
1 World Trade Center.

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
I'm trying.

The wind dies, and the agent continues his CLICKING ascent. Below him, ochre fog emerges from the broken office window like the bad breath of a giant.

EXT. 5TH AVENUE BETWEEN 33RD AND 34TH STREET - SAME

The plummeting duffel bag SMACKS against the base of the building as Officers Gonzalez and Karyn run toward two Cameramen who point their lenses at Westermark.

GONZALEZ
Turn that off!

One of the videographers lowers his machine, but the other shakes his head.

OBSTINATE CAMERAMAN
I have a right to-

The former fireman seizes the camera, and his partner CRACKS its lens with her club.

EXT. EASTERN FACE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Westermark reaches the sixty-fourth floor, clamps his boots to the line and looks through a broken window. Sitting on the far side of the CREAKING ropes that are tied to supports beams throughout the ransacked law office is a BREZNIAN SOLDIER who has two unfiltered cigarettes between his lips.

Silent and still, the suspended agent waits.

Two bright dots glow in front of the terrorist's face, and presently, he exhales a thick plume of smoke. At that moment, Westermark sneaks inside.

INT. LAW OFFICE / 64TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The Breznian Soldier looks at the window, unsure if the soundless blur he saw through his foggy exhalation was real or imaginary. Concurrently, the agent crawls behind an overturned desk, where he secures the suitcase line.

Shaking his head, the terrorist rises from the table.

BREZNIAN SOLDIER
(in Breznian)
Vermin.
(he walks toward the desk)
All New York is vermin. Even in the sky.

A silenced muzzle flashes, spitting bullets into his neck. GURGLING but unable to yell, the man THUDS upon the ground.

The agent rises, walks over to the door, twists the bolt and returns to the window.

INT. PRESIDENT'S OFFICE / MILNER & GOLD, INC. / ESB - SAME

Three floors below, the suitcase leaps from the sill of the gas-filled office, swings pendulously and rises.

INT. LAW OFFICE / 64TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Westermark hauls the portable armory through the window and sets it down. Monitoring the locked door, he removes his tactical vest, his tattered sweatshirt and his bloodstained t-shirt. His arms are covered with cuts that resemble rust-colored slugs, and his left shoulder had two extra lumps.

The skin underneath his 'Never Forget' tattoo is purple.

INT. PRESIDENT'S OFFICE / MILNER & GOLD, INC. / ESB - SAME

Three floors below, bullets BURST through the door, lancing trails through the ochre gas. One shot knocks the sofa askew, and the grenade that is wedged between its arm and the entrance falls to the carpet. The spoon POPS loose.

INT. LAW OFFICE / 64TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

A detonation BOOMS below, and Westermark shoves the shirtless Breznian Soldier through the window.

EXT. 5TH AVENUE BETWEEN 33RD AND 34TH STREET - SAME

Officers Gonzalez and Karyn see the EXPLOSION on the sixty-first floor. A moment later, a body falls from the welter of billowing smoke.

GONZALEZ
Please be somebody else.

Winds fling the Breznian into the facade, and his head becomes a long red stripe.

Gonzalez hears a quiet DING and sees a new text message: 'Almost there. W.' Relieved, he watches the decapitated corpse SMACK into the base of the building.

INT. PRESIDENT'S OFFICE / MILNER & GOLD, INC. / ESB - SAME

Two Soldiers with gas masks look through the office window, toward the stained off-white roof far, far below. One of them CLICKS on a walkie-talkie.

INT. EMERGENCY EXIT STAIRWELL / ESB - SAME

Standing on a landing beside five Soldiers, Stromford raises his two-way to his good ear.

STROMFORD
Status?

VOICE OF SOLDIER WITH GAS MASK (O.S.)
He's a shallow stain.

STROMFORD
Good.

INT. MAIN HALL / 64TH FLOOR / ESB - MOMENTS LATER

Wearing the dead man's hood, sweatshirt and tactical vest, Westermark rolls his suitcase toward the sign that reads, 'Emergency Exit / Stairwell.'

EXT. 5TH AVENUE BETWEEN 33RD AND 34TH STREET - SAME

Down on Fifth Avenue, Gonzalez listens to his cellphone, CLICKS it off, curses silently, highlights Westermark's name and places the receiver to his ear.

GONZALEZ
Bro, some bad news just came down the line.
(he listens)
(MORE)

GONZALEZ (CONT'D)
If the mass execution takes place, the president’s gonna organize a strike team and storm the building.

INT. MAIN HALL / 64TH FLOOR / ESB - SAME

Angered by the news, the agent shakes his head.

WESTERMARK
There isn’t a good way to do that.

Two more steps bring him to the door.

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
I voted for the other guy.

INT. CENTRAL AREA / 65TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Nathaniel and the Pregnant Woman watch the petite helper Cindy emerge from the men’s room, escorting two frowning OLDSTERS whose hateful gazes at the terrorists are almost audible. Stomach GROWLING, the biracial delivery boy glances at a clock on the wall, which shows the time, ten twenty-one.

FOOTFALLS resound in the emergency stairwell, and Nathaniel looks over. A moment later, the door opens, admitting Stromford, who walks over to one of the fifteen armed terrorists, a leader who wears a walkie-talkie.

STROMFORD
Round up one hundred.

The Soldier nods, and fear ripples throughout the crowd. One of the Oldsters WHISPERS to his contemporary, and the stock of a rifle SMACKS into the back of his skull. Dentures fall onto a CHINESE-AMERICAN WOMAN’s lap, and she YELLS.

A gun presses into her face. Nathaniel and the Pregnant Woman look away as the muzzle flashes, BANG.

Absolute silence follows the execution. Tears sparkle in the delivery boy’s eyes, but he refuses to let them fall.

Stromford departs through the emergency exit, and presently, a hooded Soldier emerges from the same door and walks toward the bathroom, carrying a large, heavy overcoat.

EXT. ROOFTOP / ST. JOSEPH’S CATHEDRAL - SAME

Adib sets a blue blanket upon the stone roof of St. Joseph’s Cathedral. Kneeling upon the cloth, the Arabic man looks at the corpse-adorned face of the Empire State Building, which is two long avenue blocks away.

INT. MEN'S BATHROOM / 65TH FLOOR / ESB - SAME

Disguised, Westermark carries his draped suitcase into a men's room that has six private toilets, the same number of urinals and two garbage bins that are overflowing with crumpled-up paper towels. In a far corner, cold blood fills the interstices of floor tiles like human grout.

The agent enters a stall, closes the door, slides the bolt, hangs his coat and sets the portable armory upon the porcelain. After dragging the zipper across three sides, he opens the suitcase. Inside lie forty-six pocket knives and seventy-eight fully-loaded revolvers.

INT. CENTRAL AREA / 65TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The Pregnant Woman looks at the nearest hooded Soldier.

PREGNANT WOMAN
I need to go to the bathroom.

Glancing at the expectant mother and concerned about who might be in the bathroom, Nathaniel raises his head.

NATHANIEL
Me too.

Cindy walks over and helps them to their feet. Nearby, the Bruised Oldster lifts his head.

BRUISED OLDSTER
I need to go again.

The petite woman raises the septuagenarian, and he teeters, dizzy from the blow that he received earlier. Once he is steady, the helper retrieves his dentures from the ground.

The hooded Soldier levels the barrel of his AK-47 at the crowd and looks at Cindy.

HOODED SOLDIER
(Chinese Accent)
If you do not return in four minutes, I execute four.

INT. MEN'S BATHROOM / 65TH FLOOR / ESB - MOMENTS LATER

Cindy opens the bathroom door for the bound trio. Nathaniel enters first, surveying the enclosure, looking for the man whom he saw earlier. Satisfied that the person is gone, he continues forward, followed by the Pregnant Woman and the Bruised Oldster. As the door closes, the helper rinses blood and lint from the dentures and slots them in-between the aged fellow's gums.

BRUISED OLDSTER
Thanks.

CINDY
If any of you need to move your bowels, get creative.

Walking toward the private toilets, Nathaniel looks at the Pregnant Woman who is twice his age.

NATHANIEL
You gonna be single mom?

PREGNANT WOMAN
Yeah.

NATHANIEL
You'll do good-- like mine.

A silent wraith that is the agent emerges from a stall, pressing a finger to his lips. (His hood is off.)

WESTERMARK
I'm-

NATHANIEL
Run!

Nathaniel throws himself at the stranger, and the Pregnant Woman hastens toward the exit. Westermark evades the heroic delivery boy and SLAMS his shoulder against the door, shutting it and CRACKING his collar bone. Red with pain, he looks at the motley gathering.

WESTERMARK
I'm here-
(he GASPS)
-to help.

NATHANIEL
Prove it.

The agent spins Nathaniel around and cuts his right handcuff. A multitude of CRACKS sound from the delivery boy's joints as he stretches his sore limbs for the first time in more than twelve hours.

NATHANIEL (CONT'D)
So?

WESTERMARK
Look under the towels.

NATHANIEL
Aight.

Suspicious, Nathaniel approaches the steel receptacle. The Pregnant Woman, the Bruised Oldster and Cindy watch the young man brush aside crumpled paper towels.

NATHANIEL (CONT'D)
These shits is dirty.

WESTERMARK
Deeper.

Grimacing, Nathaniel plunges his hand into the refuse. Metal CLINKS, and the delivery boy looks at his peers.

NATHANIEL
The dude’s for real.

Westermark locks the door, and Cindy looks at her watch.

CINDY
There’s only two minutes.

WESTERMARK
Okay. They trust you?

CINDY
They’re not scared of me.

WESTERMARK
Okay. Bring people in here. Cut their cuffs--only one so that they can pretend they’re still on--and tell them to take a gun and a knife. Do you understand?

Frightened, the petite woman nods her head.

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
A window is going to shatter on the east side of the room. That’s the signal. When you see that, you need to shoot or stab as many bad guys as you can as quickly as you can. Go for their heads and necks.

Cindy is horrified.

CINDY
We’ll...we’ll be massacred.

WESTERMARK
You’re being massacred right now. And things are about to get a whole lot worse very, very soon.

Nathaniel cuts one of the Pregnant Woman’s cuffs. Freed, she stretches her arms.

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
This could be the only chance any of you ever get, and you need to take it.

Tears roll down Cindy’s face.

PREGNANT WOMAN
He's right.

Nathaniel cuts the Bruised Oldster's right handcuff as the Pregnant Woman secrets a revolver beside her swollen stomach.

WESTERMARK
Wait for the signal-- it'll come before eleven o'clock. Do not go before then. The counterattack needs to happen at the same time on all three floors or the bad guys'll see what's going on and contain it.

Cindy wipes her eyes and nods her head 'yes.' Standing beside the garbage bin, the Bruised Oldster and Nathaniel withdraw revolvers.

BRUISED OLDSTER
Been a while since I handled a six-shooter.

NATHANIEL
Gramps is hardcore.

Westermark raises his '#1 at being #1' coffee mug.

WESTERMARK
And tell everybody not to shoot the guy holding this.

NATHANIEL
You brung that from home?

INT. CENTRAL AREA / 65TH FLOOR / ESB - MOMENTS LATER

Cindy opens the bathroom door. Hands behind their backs and secretly armed, Nathaniel, the Pregnant Woman and the Bruised Oldster emerge and walk toward the crowd.

EXT. ROOFTOP / ST. JOSEPH'S CATHEDRAL - MOMENTS LATER

Atop the cathedral, three mounted rifles that are fitted with remote trigger pullers point toward the eastern face of the Empire State Building. Adib looks through the telescopic sight of the first weapon and sees the top corner of an opaque sixty-fifth floor window. Glances through its neighbors reveal similar views of the sixty-sixth and sixty-seventh floors.

INT. CENTRAL AREA / 65TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Westermark emerges from the bathroom and walks toward the stairwell, wearing a checkered hood, carrying the coat that covers the suitcase.

On the opposite side of the room, Cindy silently mouths the word “bathroom” to two bound ESB SECURITY GUARDS, one male and one female, and a tattooed ELECTRICIAN. The draftees nod their heads and look at the nearest Soldier.

ELECTRICIAN
I need to use bathroom.

MALE SECURITY GUARD
Me too.

FEMALE SECURITY GUARD
I’d like to go.

INT. MEN’S BATHROOM / 66TH FLOOR / ESB - MOMENTS LATER

On the floor above, the young redhead named Jennifer who wears clear braces escorts an ASIAN BUSINESSMAN and the mascara-stained Hispanic Woman into the sixty-sixth floor bathroom. A moment after the door closes, Westermark materializes and presses his index finger to his lips.

INT. COMMON AREA / 67TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - LATER

The baby-faced floor-leader named Childs who annexed the observatory adjusts his checkered hood and surveys the densely-packed congregation that fills the common area. Watching the terrorist with one eye is the substantial woman Shanice who chastises disrespectful people in the loading dock and wherever else she happens upon them.

CHILDS
You want another black eye?

The Latina shakes her head, ‘no’ and looks at the floor.

CHILDS (CONT'D)
Correct.

Childs walks away.

Shanice shut one eye and watches the floor leader with the other...as if aiming an imaginary gun.

INT. CENTRAL AREA / 65TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Six hooded Soldiers march one hundred Captives toward the emergency exit. Included amongst those selected for the mass execution is Nathaniel, who glances at a hanging clock and sees that the time is ten forty-eight.

A frightened FEMALE CAPTIVE bolts from the line, and a machine gun CRACKLES, knocking her over. Her face and knees SQUEAK as she slides across the wood.

INT. MAIN AREA / 66TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Fifteen hooded Soldiers monitor the sixty-sixth floor Captives. Something hard CLATTERS upon the wood, breaking the silence and garnering the attention of a terrorist.

Pointing his AK-47 in the direction of the noise, the tall captor enters the crowd. People scoot away from his barrel, and in ten strides, he reaches a small clearing.

Lying in front of his boots is a fallen revolver.

Alarmed by what he sees, the terrorist steps on the weapon, looks around and raises his walkie-talkie. Jennifer, the Asian Businessman, the Hispanic Woman and a score of others look east, anxiously awaiting the signal.

INT. LAW OFFICE / 64TH FLOOR / ESB - MOMENTS LATER

City lights shine inside the ransacked law office, dimly illuminating broken windows, CREAKING ropes and the disguised agent, who is seated by the door, wearing a hood and an AK-47, looking at the small screen of his cellphone.

Outside the room, FOOTFALLS echo.

Rhett Westermark steels himself, knowing that he is at the edge of a terrible precipice. With his right thumb, he CLICKS the ‘Send’ key.

His message reads, ‘20 seconds.’

The agent secrets his cellphone and picks up two lighted cigarettes, which he puts in-between his lips in imitation of the Breznian guard whom he earlier killed. Concurrently, a hooded Soldier enters the room, looks over and waves.

Dragging upon both smokables, Westermark returns the salutation and rises from his chair. Hostages file into the law office, accompanied by six terrorists who aim AK-47s. Burning tobacco glares in the agent’s eyes.

As the room fills, Westermark descries Nathaniel near the end of the line and approaches him, pointing at the ‘#1 at being #1’ mug that depends from his tactical vest. Seeing the cup, the delivery boy nods.

The agent lets his AK-47 dangle and reaches for his pistols.

EXT. ROOFTOP / ST. JOSEPH’S CATHEDRAL

Atop the ancient roof of St. Joseph’s Cathedral, Adib presses the button of his hub controller. The remote trigger pullers attached to all three mounted rifles CLICK in unison.

EXT. MIDTOWN EAST / MANHATTAN - SAME

Muzzles flash atop the church. Three bullets WHISTLE in harmony.

INT. CENTRAL AREA / 65TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

On the east side of the sixty-fifth floor, a window that is covered with black paint bulges. Cindy, the Pregnant Woman, the Bruised Oldster, the Electrician, two Security Guards and twenty others look over.

INT. MAIN AREA / 66TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

On the east side of the sixty-sixth floor, spiderweb lines CRACK the bulging black glass. Jennifer, the Hispanic Woman, the Asian Businessman and a score of others reach for their concealed weapons.

INT. COMMON AREA / 67TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

On the east side of sixty-seventh floor, riven glass SHATTERS. New York City lights spill into the room. Shanice and twenty-one others draw their guns.

EXT. 5TH AVENUE BETWEEN 33RD AND 34TH STREET - SAME

Officers Gonzalez and Karyn see the vertical row of shattered windows. Each painted shard flickers dark and brilliant, dark and brilliant as it twists in the air.

INT. CENTRAL AREA / 65TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Cindy, the Pregnant Woman, the Bruised Oldster, the Electrician, two Security Guards and twenty others point guns at their captors, most of whom are distracted by the broken window. GUNSHOTS resound. Bullets CRACK open four hoods and SMACK against tactical vests. Two men are thrown into a riven window, which SHATTERS.

EXT. EASTERN FACE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

A pair of Soldiers fall out of the Empire State Building.

INT. MAIN AREA / 66TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Bullets CRACK into the exposed heads and napes of six hooded Soldiers who are caught unawares. Jennifer, the Hispanic Woman, the Asian Businessman and twenty others fire over the hunched backs of their peers, BANG, BANG, BANG, BANG, BANG...

Apprehending the situation, the nine who remain upright point the barrels of their machine guns at the crowd.

INT. COMMON AREA / 67TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

All across the sixty-seventh floor, AK-47 muzzles CRACKLE. Bound captives SHOUT and YELL as bullets lance their insides.

Shanice points her gun at Childs and fires, BANG. The bullet scrapes a line across the side of his head and puts a dot in the wall. Presently, the baby-faced unit leader aims his gun at the Latina.

INT. LAW OFFICE / 64TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Standing directly in-between two hooded Soldiers, Westermark aims across the room, fires, puts muzzles to the heads of his neighbors and fires again. Bullets CRACK open four skulls, and as the lobotomized men fall, Nathaniel and a GOATEED REDHEAD draw guns and shoot the two remaining terrorists point blank.

Borne by a skull shard, a checkered hood flies into the air.

INT. CENTRAL AREA / 65TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The Bruised Oldster fires a shot into one of the six upright enemies, lancing the man's neck. A RATTLING machine gun blast rips across the crowd and CRACKS the aged fellow's sternum. COUGHING out his dentures, he collapses.

AK-47s CRACKLE, and innocent people SCREAM.

Captives who possess knives frantically cut the handcuffs of their neighbors. Bleeding from her right arm, the Pregnant Woman fires her revolver. The shot CLANKS against an AK-47, knocking it from the terrorist's hands. Nearby, the Electrician discards his empty revolver and scrambles toward the fallen machine gun. GUNSHOTS echo.

Ears ringing and cover with soot, Cindy crawls across the floor, COUGHS and collapses. Her palm lands upon the upper set of the (deceased) oldster's dentures.

Nearby, the Pregnant Woman squeezes her trigger, CLINK, CLINK, CLINK. Fear shines in her eyes.

INT. MAIN AREA / 66TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The redheaded helper who has invisible braces pulls the trigger of her gun, CLINK. Dropping the weapon, Jennifer seizes a fire extinguisher from the wall and pulls its pin and looks at the wounded Asian Businessman. All around, AK-47s CRACKLE and people YELL.

INT. COMMON AREA / 67TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Childs fires his AK-47 into Shanice, and she YELLS. Soon, the floor leader ducks behind a desk and pulls off his torn, bloody hood. A quick assessment of the common area shows him that only four of his peers remain standing.

GUNSHOTS resound as Childs arms two grenades, tosses them into the crowd and slots a new clip into his machine gun. Explosions BOOM. Bodies are sundered, cast in all directions, and emergency sprinklers HISS. SCREAMS and smoke fill the east side of the common area.

The baby-faced leader points his gun at the crowd, and a speeding shape SLAMS into him.

SHANICE
No you won't!

Shanice and Childs WHANG against a window pane. The bloodied woman squeezes the trigger of the terrorist's AK-47, which CRACKLES, tearing open the ceiling.

A lone bullet CLINKS against the glass.

EXT. EASTERN FACE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The window SHATTERS. Childs and Shanice fall into the sky. As they plummet to their deaths, the Latina SLAPS the terrorist across the face.

INT. MAIN AREA / 66TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Guns CRACKLE. Concealed behind an overturned desk, two hooded Soldiers slot fresh clips into their AK-47s. As they rise from behind their cover, two cones of white foam BLAST into their faces, burning their eyes.

An instant later, Jennifer and the Asian Businessman swing fire extinguishers at the frothy targets. Metal CRACKS the bone underneath. As the brained terrorists stumble back, the white foam turns bright red.

INT. EMERGENCY EXIT STAIRWELL / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Three hooded Soldiers hasten up the stairwell, toward the sixty-fifth floor landing where two Sentries point their mounted M240 machine gun at the emergency exit. Hearing FOOTFALLS, the stationed pair looks down the steps.

SENTRY
There's some-

The climbers shoot the Sentries and continue up the stairs. Ascending, Nathaniel and the Goateed Redhead remove their hoods.

NATHANIEL
Don’t wanna get shot on accident.

WESTERMARK
Stay here.

As Westermark proceeds to the next floor, his accomplices approach the mounted M240.

NATHANIEL
Dibs on the super gun.

EXT. 5TH AVENUE BETWEEN 33RD AND 34TH STREET - SAME

Officers Gonzalez and Karyn stand on the ladder of Tall Todd’s apparatus, Marilyn, firing pump-action shotguns at the digital projectors, BOOM, CLACK-CLACK, BOOM. Lenses CRACK, and the ‘Do Not Enter’ warning upon the base of the building blurs, turns to static and vanishes.

INT. CENTRAL AREA / 65TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

A grenade EXPLODES in-between the two ESB Security Guards. Limbs are shorn.

Hidden behind sooty bodies, the wounded Chinese Soldier who earlier bruised and killed the oldster pulls off his mask and crawls forward. Twenty feet lie between him and the exit.

Laboriously, he passes dozens of still bodies, one of which belongs to his forced employee, Cindy. Suddenly, she sweeps her right hand across his neck, where the oldster’s dentures scrape away a long flap of skin. Draining out, the Chinese Soldier collapses, SHRIEKING.

The Electrician tackles a hooded captor, stabs a knife deep into his right eye and surveys the central area.

Only two terrorists remain.

Seeing them, the Pregnant Woman aims her newly-acquired machine gun.

EXT. EASTERN FACE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Painted glass SHATTERS, and the pair of Soldiers fly into the air, gripping their AK-47s.

YELLING, they squeeze their triggers.

EXT. 5TH AVENUE BETWEEN 33RD AND 34TH STREET - SAME

Standing beside the fire engine, Gonzalez, Karyn and Tall Todd descry two distant falling people whose CRACKLING machine guns push them across the sky like jet engines.

TALL TODD
Under cover! Everyone!

GONZALEZ
Now!

Firefighters, Police Officers, Marines, Reporters and Cameramen scramble inside buildings and clamber underneath parked cars. Wild bullets CRACK glass, steel and stone, radiating from the pinwheel fireworks that are the plummeting terrorists. A moment later, the men reach their shadows and are SMACKED by the asphalt.

INT. MAIN AREA / 66TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Jennifer, the Hispanic Woman and the Asian Businessman watch twenty freed New Yorkers tackle the remaining sixty-sixth floor Soldiers. Tightly-gripped knives plunge into the faces, necks and groins of the hooded enemies.

INT. EMERGENCY EXIT STAIRWELL / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Westermark passes by the Sentries whom he just killed and approaches a blind corner.

INT. THE NEST (SECURITY BOOTH) / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Sixteen rows of gray-green security monitors show Branislav only one tableau-- freed New Yorkers and felled associates.

BRANISLAV
(to himself in Russian)
Where’d all these guns come from?

Shaking his head, the Russian CLICKS his walkie-talkie.

BRANISLAV (CONT'D)
All teams are down.

Smiles shine upon the faces of the Plump and Skinny Security Guards who lie manacled and fettered in the corner of The Nest. Withdrawing from the console, Branislav levels his semiautomatic pistol at the two men.

BRANISLAV (CONT'D)
Keep smiling.

The gun flashes.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM / 68TH FLOOR / ESB - SAME

Stromford lowers his walkie-talkie and looks at Hawkins, whose composure evinces little change. The pockmarked leader turns his gaze to Chatterjee and Colorado.

HAWKINS
Prepare for withdrawal

The technicians remove padlocks from a steel-plated laptop computer, SNAP in three cables and raises the screen. Behind the thick glass are the words, 'Detonator Access.'

EXT. EMERGENCY EXIT STAIRWELL / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Westermark leans against a blind corner of the stairwell as an unseen M240 flashes, its brilliant reports THUNDERING like an industrial press. A revolver BANGS, and somebody YELLS. The gunfire ceases.

After discarding his hood, the agent extends the "#1 at being #1" coffee mug around the corner.

WESTERMARK
Over here! Don't shoot.

BROOKLYN ACCENT (O.S.)
Hey! It's the guy with the mug.

A glance up the stairs reveals two dead Sentries, an open door and thirty freed New Yorkers.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM / 68TH FLOOR / ESB - SAME

Hawkins and Chatterjee don backpacks, as does Stromford. Colorado rises from his chair, raises his arm and salutes the leathery Texan.

COLORADO
It's been an honor sir.

STROMFORD
Likewise.

The pockmarked leader pockets the small photograph of his sons and glances at the table. Flashing on the screen of the steel-plated laptop are the words, 'Press Enter to Begin.'

INT. LOBBY (5TH AVENUE ENTRANCE) / ESB - SAME

A THUD resounds throughout the lobby, followed by another. Glass CRACKS, and an emergency exit BURSTS on it hinges, knocked in by a battering ram. Sparks HISS from torn electrical cables, illuminating insulated SWAT team members and Firefighters.

INT. EMERGENCY EXIT STAIRWELL / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Westermark ascends past the open door of the sixty-seventh floor. Inside the common area are hundreds and hundreds of freed New Yorkers and scores of prone bodies belonging to those who did not survive the confrontation. Faces displaying joy and relief and sadness and anger and gratitude turn toward the agent, who does not allow himself to feel the emotions that will come later.

WESTERMARK
Evacuate the building. Use the stairs and bring guns.

INT. MAIN HALL / 68TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The conference room door opens. Pistol aimed, Stromford emerges, looking for enemies in the long oaken hall that spans the entire floor. Seeing none, he motions an all-clear sign. Hawkins and Chatterjee enter the passageway.

CHATTERJEE
You sure it’s safe?

The Texan SLAMS a fist into the Indian fellow’s stomach, doubling him over.

STROMFORD
Relatively.

Stromford walks to the reserved elevator and POUNDS thrice on the steel. The door opens, revealing the Asian Soldier.

Out in the stairwell, the M240 THUNDERS. Silence follows the blast, and the Texan points at the elevator. Hawkins and Chatterjee enter, and as the door closes, the sucker-punched fellow looks at his assailant.

CHATTERJEE
Don’t get shot in the face.

STROMFORD
Funny.

The elevator departs.

Stromford SCRATCHES the lightning bolt tattoos on his neck, raises his pistol and stalks toward the emergency exit.

INT. EMERGENCY EXIT STAIRWELL / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Out on the landing, Westermark passes a dead Sentry and nears the mounted machine gun.

INT. MAIN HALL / 68TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The Texan advances west.

INT. EMERGENCY EXIT STAIRWELL / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Kneeling, the agent aims the M240 east.

INT. MAIN HALL / 68TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Stromford steps clear of the exit, drops his backpack on the ground and kicks it.

INT. EMERGENCY EXIT STAIRWELL / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Westermark sees the shadow pass underneath the door and squeezes his trigger. Brilliant THUNDER fills the stairwell.

INT. MAIN HALL / 68TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Shoulder to the wall, Stromford watches bullets SMASH through the door and WHANG the exit bar, warping it and bending it until it SNAPS in half. Outside, the hammer of the M240 CLANKS upon an empty shell.

INT. EMERGENCY EXIT STAIRWELL / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Smoke clouds the landing, providing a thick medium for the beams of bright light that emerge from the main hall. Surveying the chewed-up door, Westermark strides forward, pistol in hand.

One of the holes goes dark, and the agent prostrates himself. An extruding gun fires, BANG, BANG, BANG. Bullets WHISTLE over Westermark's back as he returns fire. Bones CRUNCH. A severed pinky falls from the Texan's hand.

The extruding weapon points down, and the agent fires again. Lead CLANKS against the barrel. Knocked loose, the semiautomatic CLATTERS on the ground.

INT. MAIN HALL / 68TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Stromford withdraws his sheared hand from the aperture and pulls a grenade from his vest.

A pistol with a silencer emerges from a hole. As the muzzle flashes, the Texan kicks.

INT. EMERGENCY EXIT STAIRWELL / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The door SMACKS Westermark in the face.

INT. MAIN HALL / 68TH FLOOR / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Gunpowder sears hair and skin on the right side of Stromford's scalp. As the agent's gun falls, the Texan draws a hunting knife and lunges.

INT. EMERGENCY EXIT STAIRWELL / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Westermark SLAMS on his back, sees his enemy and kicks. His right heel SMACKS against Stromford's chest.

The Texan slashes his knife across the agent's thigh, reverses his grip and swipes in the opposite direction. A flap of skin opens, revealing carmine muscle.

Agonized, Westermark rolls over, grabs the edge of the landing and flings himself forward. As he tumbles down the steps, Stromford, follows, rubbing his chest.

STROMFORD
President Brownley murdered three regiments that were under my command.

The agent SLAMS against the wall of the landing between floors. His remaining pistol CLATTERS on the stone, and the "#1 at being #1 mug' SHATTERS.

STROMFORD (CONT'D)
Young men. Dead for no reason.

Stromford lands upon Westermark's back, knocking the air from his lungs. The agent SMACKS his elbow into the Texan's chest and SMACKS him again, CRACKING his sternum.

Fumbled, the hunting knife CLANKS down the steps.

Stromford grabs the agent's throat and SLAMS his face against the stone. Cartilage SNAPS.

Suffocating, Westermark seizes a piece of the mug, flips onto his back and slices open his enemy's forehead. Blood spills into Stromford's eyes.

The agent jams the shard underneath the Texan's vest and presses it in. Insides SQUEAK.

STROMFORD (CONT'D)
No.

Leaning forward, Westermark shoves Stromford from the landing.

As the Texan tumbles down the stairwell, yellow entrails are pulled from his stomach by the battered agent's clenched fist.

WESTERMARK
Sounds like you were a shitty commander.

Disembowelled, Stromford lands beside a dead Sentry, where his head is kicked by one of the many Captives filing out of the sixty-seventh floor. Westermark discards pale guts.

INT. MAIN HALL / 68TH FLOOR / ESB - MOMENTS LATER

Pointing a pistol forward, the agent limps into the long hall, his nose askew, the tourniquet on his right thigh dark with blood. Upon the floor he sees the discarded backpack.

It has a ripcord.

WESTERMARK
Christ.

INT. HALL OF THE 86TH FLOOR - SAME

Hawkins, Chatterjee and the Asian Soldier walk toward the glass doors that lead out onto the observatory balcony. Against the pockmarked leader's right ear is a cellphone.

HAWKINS
Snuff New York.

The trio walks outside.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM / 68TH FLOOR / ESB - SAME

Colorado closes his cellphone, sets the device beside the steel-plated laptop computer and puts his index finger on the 'Enter' key. Westermark ambles into the room and points his gun at the one-armed fellow.

WESTERMARK
Back away fr-

As the 'Enter' key CLICKS, the agent fires. Colorado spins in his chair and spills to the ground.

Westermark hastens to the computer, sees the word, 'Activated' and fires his gun. Wires SNAP, spitting sparks, and the steel-plated machine flies off of the table and dents the wall.

Frustrated, the agent scans the room, descrying nothing but abandoned laptops and the technician's cellphone.

Clutching his wounded shoulder, Colorado grins.

Something BOOMS.

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
No.

Horrified, Westermark recalls old tragedies and a far fresher regret...

INT. LIVING ROOM / DANIELLE'S APARTMENT - SAME

Alone on her couch in the living room, Danielle watches coverage of the ESB event. Something BOOMS. The television and lights die, and she looks toward the window.

Outside, a black curtain sweeps across the metropolis.

EXT. 86TH FLOOR OBSERVATORY / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING

Hawkins, Chatterjee and the Asian Soldier stand on the north side of the eighty-sixth floor observatory, watching the dark wave that engulfs the island, spreading like spilled ink. Presently, the opaque blanket snuffs the observatory lights and continues south, until no part of the metropolis has electrical power.

For the first time since the blackout of 2003, moonlight illuminates New York City.

The three men CLICK the cross strap buckles of their parachutes and stride toward a hole in the security rail where a wooden walkway extends out into the black night.

Frustrated by the unsuccessful conclusion of his plan, Hawkins ruminates. A few strides later, a bold new thought dissolves his misgivings.

HAWKINS
I have an idea for another event.
(he looks at Chatterjee)
One that's even bigger than this.

CHATTERJEE
When should I contact the financiers?

HAWKINS
I'll have a schematic by Friday.

Clouds cover the moon, and the city becomes a darker shade of black. Support ropes CREAK as Hawkins traverses the plank.

The man who was once a politician and a bereaved father and is now something else jumps into the night.

INT. EMERGENCY EXIT STAIRWELL / ESB - MOMENTS LATER

Westermark races up the stairwell past a door marked, '81.'

INT. THE NEST (SECURITY BOOTH) / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The Nest is dark, and the door is ajar. Through the narrow opening, Branislav watches freed New Yorkers walk down the stairwell, illuminated by matches, lighters, cigars and cigarettes. A gap in the procession draws near, and the traitorous guard sneaks outside.

EXT. 86TH FLOOR OBSERVATORY / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Westermark ambles onto the observatory, scans the area and sees that he is alone. Looking at Colorado's cellphone, he finds the 'Recent Calls' menu, highlights the top number ('1A') and presses 'Connect.' The device dials, and the crouched agent surveys his environs.

A drifting blue-green star appears in the north sky.

HAWKINS'S VOICE ON PHONE (O.S.)
Yes?

Westermark points his gun just above the cellphone-illuminated parachutist and fires. The flash brightens the night, glaring upon Hawkins as well as Chatterjee and the Asian Soldier, who both drift beside their leader.

Squeezing quickly, the agent sends a flurry of bullets into the flanking canopies. Fabric RIPS, and the subordinates plummet toward Thirty-Fourth Street, six hundred feet below.

EXT. 34TH STREET OFF OF 5TH AVENUE - SAME

Ten yards from the entrance that Mr. Wallman used for forty-one years, Chatterjee and the Asian Soldier SMACK against the pavement, bounce and CRUMBLE.

EXT. 86TH FLOOR OBSERVATORY / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Westermark aims at Hawkins, who covers up his phone and becomes an indistinct blur.

HAWKINS'S VOICE ON PHONE (O.S.)
You're going to kill me?

WESTERMARK
Who financed this?

The drifting smudge does not respond. Presently, it gets smaller and smaller.

Westermark fires. A YELL emerges from the cellphone and echoes across the city.

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
Who?

HAWKINS'S VOICE ON PHONE (O.S.)
Look at the legacy of this country
and ask yourself this:
Who wouldn't?

The agent aims at the middle of the diminishing smudge that is the parachutist and fires, repeatedly. Severed by the flurry of bullets, the parachutist's legs fall from his body.

EXT. ROOFTOPS NORTH OF 34TH STREET - SAME

The shorn limbs SLAM against a rooftop. Hawkins drifts, legless, borne by the wind, trailing blood across the tar. His teeth CHATTER.

HAWKINS
Tell B-Brownley-
(he shivers)
T-tell B-B-Brownley...th-that...

The pockmarked man loses consciousness. His head tilts, and the luminous cellphone falls from his right hand.

EXT. 86TH FLOOR OBSERVATORY / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

Lowering his gun, Westermark watches the tiny mote of light drop into oblivion.

EXT. 5TH AVENUE BETWEEN 33RD AND 34TH STREET - LATER

Hundreds of freed New Yorkers pour onto the street, where ambulances flash their lights and scores of PARAMEDICS and NURSES tend to those who were badly injured. Aiding the medical persons are dozens of Firefighters, including Tall Todd who now carries an INJURED WOMAN toward an ambulance.

Presently, the Pregnant Woman and Cindy emerges from the lobby and point out Branislav.

PREGNANT WOMAN
That one!

CINDY
He's one of them!

The traitorous guard turns to flee, but is stopped by twenty angry New Yorkers, who brace his arms, take his gun and take his wallet (which they empty and discard). Officers Gonzalez and Karyn race through the crowd with their batons raised.

Dripping with sweat and GASPING for air, Nathaniel emerges from the building, holding a large coat that weighs about as much as an M240 machine gun.

EXT. 86TH FLOOR OBSERVATORY / EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - SAME

The clouds withdraw from the moon, and lunar light bathes the city. Limping, bleeding and CLICKING, Westermark holsters his pistol, walks to the east side of the observatory and rounds the corner.

Fifteen slow and painful strides bring him to the rail, where he pauses and looks out. A little over three miles to the south stands 1 World Trade Center.

Patting the Empire State Building with his right palm, Rhett Westermark nods his head at the distant monument, satisfied.

EXT. 5TH AVENUE BETWEEN 33RD AND 34TH STREET - LATER

The crowd along Fifth Avenue has thinned. Bloodstained, broken, CLICKING and limping, Westermark emerges from a warped brass doorway and approaches Tall Todd and Gonzalez, both of whom are unsettled by the sight of their friend.

WESTERMARK
That building's got a lot of steps.

TALL TODD
You did it.

GONZALEZ
All the way.

The firefighter and police officer gently pat the agent on the back.

WESTERMARK
Thanks for helping.

TALL TODD
Of course.

GONZALEZ
We all got the same tattoo on our backs.

Westermark, Tall Todd and Gonzalez exchange meaningful nods.

TALL TODD
(to Westermark)
I don't mean to alarm you, but you look like a used diaper.

GONZALEZ
I was gonna say third world sewage.

WESTERMARK
I appreciate that.

The firefighter points at an ambulance.

TALL TODD
Let’s get you looked at.

Together, they walk toward the stroboscopic lights.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM B / INTELLIGENCE OFFICE AT NYPD - 4 AM

Inside the candlelit conference room, Porter watches the news on a laptop computer, as do four of his Agents, including Adib, who is a sloppy mess. All of them smoke cigarettes and drink cold coffee, bedraggled but relieved.

NEWS ANCHOR
The identity of the man with the ‘Number One at being Number One’ coffee mug is still unknown, but sources speculate that he is a government operative.

The boss closes the laptop computer, shaking his head.

PORTER
If that was Westermark, don’t ever tell me.

ADIB
I won’t ever tell you.
(he exhales smoke)
Though he does like coffee mugs.

Porter glares at the Arabic agent.

ADIB (CONT'D)
And is rumored to be number one.

INT. BEDROOM / DANIELLE’S APARTMENT - JUST BEFORE DAWN

The power is still out. Azure light illuminates Danielle as she sleeps, entangled in pajamas, blankets and dreams. Something CRACKLES, rousing her.

The woman sits up and listens to her blue apartment. Somewhere, something CRACKLES, quiet and slow.

Anxious, Danielle grabs a sharp letter opener from her nightstand and proceeds across the carpet.

INT. LIVING ROOM / DANIELLE’S APARTMENT - SAME

The museum director enters her living room, wielding the ersatz dagger.

Wind riffles her short, messy hair, and she turns her attention to the balcony door, which is ajar. Sitting outside is a silhouetted FIGURE whom she recognizes.

EXT. BALCONY / DANIELLE'S APARTMENT - SAME

Dressed in jeans and a charcoal sweater and wearing a sling on his left arm, the washed and bandaged agent spoons colorful amphibians into his mouth and CRUNCHES them while staring at a 'Ribbits!' cereal box that is adorned with anthropomorphic frogs who ride lily-pad skateboards.

Danielle walks outside, and Westermark withdraws a chair for her to sit on. Unsure whether or not she is still asleep, the woman takes the proffered seat.

The battered agent CRUNCHES another mouthful, swallows and nods at the cereal box.

WESTERMARK
My brother and I ate this when we were kids.

Danielle looks at the 'Ribbits!' box, befuddled by the man whom she observes.

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
They're sweeter than I remembered, but not bad.

The agent raises a multicolored chorus from the bowl and offers it to the museum director.

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
Want some?

DANIELLE
No thank you.
(she puts a hand on his elbow)
Are you okay?

CRUNCHING amphibians, Westermark surveys Central Park, where the scalp of the rising sun prickles bare treetops. After he swallows, he looks at Danielle.

WESTERMARK
The day I lost my brother changed me. Defined me. It gave me my mission, and I'm proud of what I do.

DANIELLE
You should be.

WESTERMARK
But if you only have one important thing in your life and that thing is ruined or destroyed...
(MORE)

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
(he shakes his head)
...then there's nothing left to keep you together. To keep you human.

Westermark lowers his gaze and exhales an unsteady breath.

Danielle watches, fully awake.

WESTERMARK (CONT'D)
You're right-- what you said in that message. All of it. And I think you're a terrific woman.
(he looks her in the eye)
And terrific for me.

DANIELLE
So you want to try? Us? For real?

WESTERMARK
I do.

The woman applies her lips to those of the battered man, and his shoulder CLICKS. Ignoring the pain, Westermark puts his good arm around Danielle's back and draws her close. Ecstatic frogs leap from the bowl, borne by waves of milk.

A moment later, they withdraw from each other, warmed by their contact.

DANIELLE
Wow. They really are sweet.

WESTERMARK
I'll make omelettes if you're hungry.

Wincing, gritting his teeth and CLICKING, Westermark rises from the table.

DANIELLE
Do you think you can manage?

WESTERMARK
I might be able to pull it off.

Cut to black.

The End.